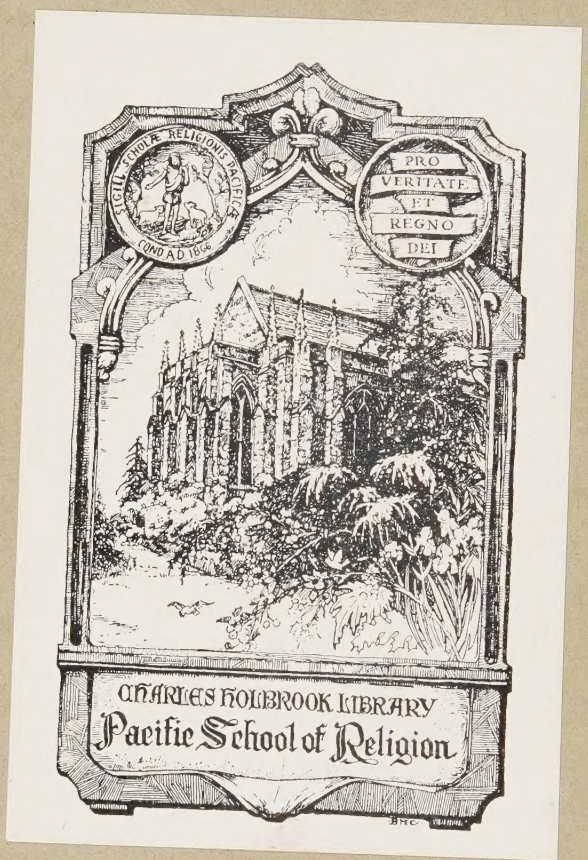

SCHOLE RELIGIONIS PACIFICAE
CONDITA AD 1916
PRO
VERITATE
ET
REGNO
DEI
CHARLES HOLBROOK LIBRARY
Pacific School of Religion

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Graduate Theological Union

https://archive.org/details/oldtestamentconc00unse

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF SIN AS REFLECTED IN THE USE OF THE TERMS חטא, עון, פשע, AND רשע

by

S. Samuel VERNON FAWCETT

B.A. (University of Alberta) 1941
B.D. (University of Alberta) 1945

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Department of Old Testament Literature
and Interpretation
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Theology
in the
Pacific School of Religion

June, 1951

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

05
1199
S54
F39
1951

41153

41152

DX85
F283

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	PROBLEMS OF TERMINOLOGY AND DATING . . .	1
	Basis of selection of terms Etymology of חטא, עון, פשע, and רשע Problems of dating materials	
II.	NEAR EASTERN CONCEPTS IN GENERAL	10
	Elements of primitive religion Babylonian ideas of sin Egyptian ideas of sin Canaanite ideas of sin Summary	
III.	THE COVENANT IN THE HEBREW CONCEPT OF SIN	34
	Covenants between persons or groups Breach of covenants = sin Covenant between Yahweh and Israel Distinctive features of Hebrew covenant Revelation of Yahweh's will Relation of sacrifice to the covenant	
IV.	THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRE-EXILIC PROPHETS .	92
	The pressures of Canaanite culture "Mishpat" in the covenant Amos, Hosea, I Isaiah, Micah Summary of eighth century prophets Deuteronomy, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah Summary of seventh century prophets	

Chapter Page

V. THE ATTITUDE OF THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS . 133

Ezekiel, II Isaiah, Haggai and Zechariah, Obadiah and Malachi, III Isaiah
Summary of post-exilic prophets

VI. THE ATTITUDE OF THE APOCALYPTIC WRITERS . 197

VII. THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRIESTLY WRITERS . . . 205

Ethical concern
Non-moral, ritual concern
Theological re-writing of history

VIII. THE ATTITUDE OF THE WORKS OF WISDOM . . . 227

The "righteous" and the "wicked"
Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes

IX. THE ATTITUDE OF THE PSALMISTS 245

Covenant
Confession
Forgiveness

X. THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF SIN 255

Covenant, the basis of the idea of sin
Pre-exilic concern with crippling of covenant through apostasy and inward unrighteousness
Post-exilic developments
Individual righteousness and wickedness according to the Law
Legalism and ritualism
Apocalyptic concern with wickedness of the "nations"
Universalism of sin
Idea of "Original Sin"

BIBLIOGRAPHY 268

CHAPTER I

PROBLEMS OF TERMINOLOGY AND DATING

The word "sin" in the English language has come to have certain definite connotations growing out of the practices of religious society in the last two or three centuries. The Oxford Dictionary defines sin as transgression against divine or moral law. W. E. Staples declares that "in modern Western society . . . the idea that man is a free-will creature is consciously or unconsciously assumed" and that the idea of sin therefore involves deliberate breach of the law broken.[1] Though the people who use the word "sin" in our society may not pause to define it exactly, its use does connote certain general ideas and assume certain underlying attitudes such as that stated by Staples.

No one word in English is an absolute equivalent for any word in Hebrew for "sin". The Hebrew word most frequently translated by the English word "sin"[2] has other meanings and shades of meaning in Hebrew, and the English word "sin" is also used to translate other Hebrew words

---

[1] W. E. Staples, "Some Aspects of Sin in the Old Testament", Journal of Near Eastern Studies, VI (April 1947), 65.

[2] חַטָּאת (root = חטא).

than that particular one. Before we can properly begin a study of the Old Testament concept of sin, therefore, we must limit the vocabulary area in which we will be working, and we must try to understand something of the etymology of the Hebrew vocabulary of sin.

There is an immediate temptation to define the Old Testament concept of sin only by an etymological study of the words which the Old Testament uses. We must avoid falling prey to that temptation. For the best that etymology can do for us is to suggest what the original meaning of a word, and of the concept it symbolized, may have been, and what peripheral associations it may have had. In the course of some generations, however, these original associations may have been lost and others picked up to take their place, so that the etymology of the term may eventually become more misleading than helpful. The only accurate understanding of the meaning of any specific Hebrew word for "sin" is to be had by examining all or most of the occurrences of that word in its religious, theological and cultural contexts.

When one is confronted with the task of deciding which Hebrew words will be taken as the normative expression of the concept of sin the task of selection seems impossible. There are countless words which are so used at some time or other in the Old Testament. Both Schultz and Baab[3] give lengthy lists of such words.

---

[3]H. Schultz, Old Testament Theology, trans.

H. Wheeler Robinson groups most of them into four classes

> according as they denote (1) deviation from the right way; (2) the changed status (guilt) of the agent; (3) rebellion against a superior, or unfaithfulness to an agreement; (4) some characterization of the quality of the act itself.[4]

The fourth group entirely, and many of the terms in the other three groups, are not central to the concept of sin and are only useful in defining the content of sin in certain specific situations where they are used in parallelism with some other word more regularly used for "sin".

In this study I have confined myself more or less to the examination of the occurrences of the four roots most frequently used in connection with the concept of sin. These are חָטָא (ḥāṭā') and עָוֹן ('āwōn), from Robinson's first group, רָשָׁע (rāshā') from his second group, and פֶּשַׁע (pesha') from his third group, with

---

J.A. Paterson; (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1898), II, 281-6. O. Baab, The Theology of the Old Testament, (New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949), pp. 84-90.

[4]H. W. Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1911), p. 43. The main Hebrew words in these four classes, including terms mentioned by all three writers, are: (1) חטא (missing the right way), עון (error), שגה (err inadvertently); (2) עול (unrighteousness), רשע (wickedness), אשם (guilt); (3) פשע (rebellion), מרד (rebellion), מרה (be disobedient, rebellious); (4) רעה (badness), חמס (violence or breach of honorable conduct), און (hollowness), שוא (nothingness), בליעל (worthless), כסיל (ignorance), בער (stupidity), בדים (lying), שקר (falsehood), et al. Cf. also L. Köhler, Theologie des alten Testaments, (Tubingen, Sicbeck, 1936), pp. 156 ff, and E. Sellin, Theologie des alten Testaments, (Leipzig, Quelle and Meyer, 1936), pp. 77ff.

their respective derivatives. Even these four roots are used in the Old Testament at times when they are not specifically associated with sin but such passages may help us in a clearer understanding of their meaning in connection with sin, nonetheless.

Though these four roots are most frequently used to denote "sin", they do not etymologically tell us very much of how the Hebrew mind defined sin or what content it saw in it. The basic meaning of חָטָא is "to miss the mark" or "to miss the goal or way". There is one passage (Judg. 20:16) where it is used of men not missing a target when slinging stones. There is another (Job 5:24) where it is used of a man not missing anything from his tent when he returns to it. In Proverbs 19:2 it is also used of missing the path when one hurries too quickly along it. In the pī'ēl form, in which it most usually means to make a sin-offering or to purify something from sin, it seems once to mean simply "to bear the loss" of animals for which one had assumed responsibility (Gen. 31:39).[5] In this case it would seem to mean to "make up what is missing". There seems to be justification, then, for seeing its meaning with respect to sin as "missing the mark or goal" required by

---

5Staples, op. cit., p. 69, cites this passage and Gen. 43:9 as evidence for his contention that "sin" in the early sources of Genesis involves almost exclusively the idea of being in debt to someone. I will deal with this further in Chapter II.

God of those who are his worshippers.

The root meaning of עָוֹן is difficult to distinguish from that of חָטָא. It seems to be "to err".[6] In passage after passage it is directly paralleled to חָטָא and it would seem that no distinction in meaning was intended.[7]

The term פֶּשַׁע is also found often in parallelism with both עָוֹן and חָטָא, and with each separately. But there are passages in political context which help us to see its basic meaning. It means to rebel or revolt against proper overlordship, or to transgress proper limits of action or of territory. It is used by the editors of Kings to describe the rebellion of the northern kingdom under Jeroboam against the authority of Rehoboam (I Ki. 12:19), and again the rebellion of the Moabites against Israel after the death of Ahab (II Ki. 1:1). It is used in the beginning of the words of Isaiah to describe the rebelliousness of children who have been brought up by a father only to balk at their father's authority (Isa. 1:2). The clear meaning of the word, when used of sin, must be rebellion against the proper authority of God.

The last of the four words, שָׁגָה, is more common than any of the other three. It is used frequently in a

---

[6] So Brown-Driver-Briggs, Lexicon, p. 730; root עוה derived from Arabic and Ethiopic roots and distinct from another identical Hebrew root meaning "to bend" or "to twist".

[7] Cf. Jer. 14:7; 16:10,17; Isa. 5:18; 43:24; 59:2; Dan. 9:16; Hos. 4:8; 13:12; and many others.

forensic sense. When two parties in a civil suit came before the judges and decision was clear-cut in favor of one or the other, the one was declared righteous (הִצְדִּיק) and the other was declared wicked (הִרְשִׁיעַ).[8] Thus the adjective, רָשָׁע, and the noun, רֶשַׁע, had reference to anyone in the position of having been declared wicked or guilty. Very frequently the death sentence was indicated in such cases, and, in the literature of the Psalms, the fate of the wicked is generally held to be utter destruction.

Each of these terms is seen to have a definite root meaning, borne out also by usage. From them we might define sin as missing the mark with respect to the commands of God, erring from the way which God prescribes, rebelling against the authority of God,[9] and being declared guilty before God's judgement. These are the etymological definitions of sin. But the way in which the writers of the various periods in Hebrew history used each of these words must also be taken into account in arriving at a definition of sin and this is the real task before us.

There is another basic difficulty in the study of the Old Testament concept of sin. That is the determination of the particular period of Hebrew history to which

---

[8]Sellin, op. cit., pp. 77f., for a discussion of the use of the Hebrew צַדִּיק. Cf. Exod. 22:8; Deut. 25:1.

[9]J. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, (Oxford, University Press, 1926), I, 414, states that there is no difference of importance in the use of חטא, עון, and פשע.

any given passage bears its witness of religious concepts. Many of the "Theologies" of the Old Testament have not tried to meet this problem, claiming to deal with the whole gamut of the literature but almost inevitably drawing most of their evidence and illustrations from one or two strata. R. E. Wolfe states that

> where theology is biblical, it is based for the most part in the Old Testament on the Priestly editor, the Deuteronomic Redactor, and the secondary nullifications of the prophets. In the New Testament it quotes mostly from the fourth gospel and the epistles. A relatively small proportion of most systems of biblical theology comes from the religious mountain peaks of the Bible, namely the prophets and Jesus as portrayed in the synoptic gospels. This fact should cause considerable concern.[10]

On the other hand, many of the "Religions" of the Old Testament have faced this problem seriously, but have not been so much concerned with religious concepts as with religious practices.

The difficulty must be met for we do not find the same concepts prevailing throughout the whole of the literature and an accurate study can only recognize that and describe what were the various concepts of the different ages. On the other hand, it is thoroughly possible that, when these various concepts have been described and laid side by side, an Old Testament concept of sin will emerge with consistent features underlying them all and bringing unity into the diversity.

---

[10] R. E. Wolfe, "The Terminology of Biblical Theology", Journal of Bible and Religion, XV (July 1947), 143-147.

It is now an acknowledged fact that the Old Testament contains no substantial body of material written down prior to the ninth century B.C.[11] We cannot, therefore, be sure that any concept mirrored in the present literature represents a period earlier than that, though it is entirely probable that many of the concepts witnessed to in the patriarchal literature of Genesis are derived from a much earlier time and retain much primitive thought. Where it is possible to parallel customs and ideas of early Old Testament literature with customs and ideas known to have been current in other lands of the Near East in much earlier times it is quite logical to assume that the written sources of the ninth century, and later, preserve concepts current also amongst the Hebrews from an earlier period. It is by this reasoning that we are able to draw a picture of the pre-Mosaic culture and thought of Israel, but we must never cease to be aware that we are reading back from our written sources and we must never read back without very good authority and without reservations. This problem is particularly acute with respect to the pre-Mosaic and Mosaic period of Hebrew thought, and one result of it is the variety of pictures

---

[11] But cf. G. E. Wright in a paper given by title at the meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis at New York, December 1950. A short survey of the paper in JBL, LXX, (March 1951), p. iii, says in part: "As a result, an increasing number of scholars are committing themselves to the tenth century as furnishing the most probable historical background for this written edition [J] of early traditions."

which is drawn of the life and thought of that period.

When we are dealing with the literature of the prophetic period and the post-Exilic period we are on less controversial ground, though even there there is difference of dating which might affect the conclusions drawn as to the evolution of thought.

CHAPTER II

NEAR-EASTERN CONCEPTS IN GENERAL

Otto Baab prefaces his recent discussion of the Old Testament concept of sin[1] with the observation that "what a religion affirms concerning the meaning of sin is a highly suggestive clue as to its entire creed." Since his concern was to set forth the whole creed of the Hebrews this was a proper way of stating the case. Our concern is with this one aspect of the Hebrew credo and we might well reverse this observation and say that what a religion presupposes in all its religious attitudes has much to tell us of the specific concept of sin.

Another writer has declared that "the nature of sin is defined by the nature of the deity sinned against".[2] This only underlines the same observation. For it affirms that what a people believes in respect to the character and will of its deity or deities will have a clear influence upon its definition of sin.

The Hebrews were a branch of the Semitic people and their religion, in its earliest manifestations, was

---

[1] Baab, op. cit., p. 84.

[2] R.B.Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, (New York, Macmillan, 1944), 123.

naturally similar to and related to that of the other Semitic nations of the Near East.[3] For this reason it is almost necessary to examine the features of Semitic religions in general for any light they may have to shed on the early concept of sin in the Old Testament. But one cannot pursue such a study very far without recognizing that the Semitic religions reflect many essential characteristics of the primitive religions of all mankind.

The usual method of studying such primitive religions is to examine the source materials now extant of all early religions, recognizing the interpolations of later editors, and to examine the practices and beliefs of primitive peoples which still exist in our world today, inferring that these same customs and beliefs must have prevailed amongst all primitive peoples in all ages and places.[4]

The three basic features of religious belief which are generally believed to be common to almost all primitive religions at some stage of their development are

---

[3]Cf. W. C. Graham, "The Religion of the Hebrews", Journal of Religion, XI (April 1931), 242-252.

[4]Some discussions of primitive religions which have followed this method and to which I have made reference in the preparation of this chapter are: E. B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, (New York, Henry Holt, 1889); Paul Radin, Primitive Religion, (New York, Viking Press, 1937); R. R. Marrett, The Threshold of Religion, (London, Oxford University Press, 1914); J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, (New York, Macmillan, 1927). Two books which apply this study more specifically to the Hebrew religion

animism, totemism and polytheism.[5] That there are vestiges of the beliefs associated with all of these in the Old Testament, betokening the fact that Hebrew religion in its earliest forms partook of the same ideas, is evident from the literature itself and has been pointed out by many writers concerned with the development of Hebrew religion.

Vestiges of animism - that belief that objects of nature are animated by a will and a life similar to man's own - seem to reside in such Old Testament passages as Genesis 18:6ff., in which Yahweh appeared to Abraham at the terebinth of Moreh, Judges 4:4-5, in which Deborah judged the tribes under the palm-tree, Exodus 3:2-5, in which Yahweh spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. They seem to be presupposed also in the large religious significance of streams and wells and fountains. Such are En-mishpat (well of judgement), En-Shemesh (well of Shemesh, the sun-god), En-Eglaim (well of the two calves), En-ha-tannim (well of the dragons) and others.[6] The religious significance accorded to standing stones,

---

are: W. R. Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, (3rd ed. with notes by S. A. Cook; New York, Macmillan, 1927) and W.O.E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development, (New York, Macmillan, 1930).

[5]Some scholars posit an earlier stage in which the simple belief in "Mana" was the only religious supposition. It seems to me that this belief breathes through all these early religious ideas.

[6]Gen. 14:7; Josh. 15:7; Ezek. 47:10; Neh. 2:13; et al.

such as that of Bethel (Gen. 28:11ff.) and of Joshua's covenant (Josh. 24:27), would seem to be derived from a similar belief.

Oesterley and Robinson and Meek have claimed certain features of tribal life, particularly the names of many of the tribes, as evidence of a once existent totemic basis of tribal society. Totemism is the form of society which relates a tribe in kinship with a species of plant or animal from which it is considered to have descended. Religious ceremonial in such society sometimes involved the partaking of the blood of the totemic animal to strengthen the relationship. Some of the Hebrew tribal names which may once have been the names of animals are: Leah (wild cow), Rachel (ewe), Caleb (dog), Simeon (hyena), Deborah (bee) and Levi (snake).[7] The blessing of his twelve sons by Jacob in Genesis 49 describes Judah as a lion's whelp, Issachar as a large-boned ass, Naphtali as a hind and Benjamin as a ravening wolf. The blessing of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 likens Joseph to a fierce bull. All of these might also be interpreted totemically.

Evidences of the influence of polytheism in Hebrew religion are also to be seen. The prohibition of sacrifices to the "se'irim" in Leviticus 17:7 and the

---

[7]Oesterley and Robinson, op. cit., p. 66; T. J. Meek, "Some Religious Origins of the Hebrews", American Journal of Semitic Languages, XXXVII (1921), 101ff., and Hebrew Origins, (New York, Harpers, 1936), 120.

statement in II Chronicles 11:15 that priests had actually been appointed for them, must be recognized as evidence at least of a strong popular belief in the power of some sort of desert demon or god. Moreover, Baalism and Babylonian idol-worship could never have been the threat to Yahweh worship that they were if the people had entirely outlived all their primitive tendencies to polytheism.

The underlying belief which permeates all these aspects of primitive religious thought is the belief in a mysterious, non-human power which surrounds and exhales from those objects or processes or places considered "holy", and whose effects are beyond the natural control of man. It is most usually called today by the Melanesian term "Mana". R.H. Codrington, who first introduced the term itself to English use, defined it as

> a power or influence, not physical, and in a way supernatural; but it shows itself in physical force, or in a kind of power or excellence which a man possesses. This Mana is not fixed in anything, but spirits, whether disembodied souls or supernatural beings, have it and can impart it; and it essentially belongs to personal beings to originate it, though it may act through the media of water, or a stone, or a bone.[8]

T. H. Robinson, on the other hand, claims that "Mana" is in no sense personal, while Paul Radin explains that for some primitive people it was undoubtedly experienced as

---

[8]R. H. Codrington, The Melanesians, (Oxford, University Press, 1891), 119.

personal and for others as impersonal.[9] It is probable, as Norman Snaith has pointed out, that

> it is a term for a set of notions so diffuse that they are wholly indefinable, whether personal or impersonal.[10]

It is an ambivalent power which may manifest itself either in good or in evil influences upon the life of an individual or a group. Conversely, the attitude of an individual or a group toward it may be one either of horror or of veneration or of both.[11]

The first indication that this "Mana" is at work for evil toward the life of a person or group is the feeling that something adverse has happened, or is about to happen, to that person or group. Illness in the household, accidents in the group, loss of members through disease or accident, defeat in battle, loss of crops or property, poor business ventures, or even just a vague feeling of malaise, indicate that something is not right in a man's relationship with this mysterious power. That which has gone wrong will be sought in some fault, known or unknown, in the individual or his group. Or it will be sought in the deliberately evil intentions of some enemy who has employed some form of "magic" to turn this power against him. Or it will be sought

---

[9] Both quoted in N. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, (London, Epworth Press, 1944), 38-39.

[10] Ibid., p. 39.

[11] Cf. the ambivalence of the English term "awe".

simply in the capricious displeasure of the gods, demons or totem, or whatever other personalities may be considered to inhabit the non-human sphere at the particular stage of religion reached.[12] That this sense of "Mana" seems to have been strongest in relation to the basic experiences of life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, death, work and great tribal occasions[13] may be due to the mystery of these experiences themselves or even to the fact that in them disaster would be felt most keenly.

If there were attempts to rationalize the working of this mysterious power they would almost inevitably be thwarted by the completely indiscriminate manner in which it influenced life, striking in so many different times and places and circumstances.[14] Likewise, any sure method of enlisting "Mana" on one's side or of avoiding its adverse effects was out of the question.

Yet it was natural that men should do their utmost to avoid the evil side of the working of "Mana".

---

[12]Cf. Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 645, note by S. A. Cook.

[13]This has been noted by several writers: N. P. Williams, Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin, (London, Longman's, 1927), 15; R. Gordis, "Some Effects of Primitive Thought on Language", AJSL, LV (1938), 274-5; Jon. Hempel, "Sünde und Offenbarung nach alt- und neutestamentlicher Anschauung", Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie, (Zehnter Jahrgang, 1933), 163-199.

[14]Ibid., p. 165.

This negative side of "Mana" became what we know as "taboo". In primitive religions it was most often manifested in abstinence from certain acts - contact with unclean or contaminated things, association with death or the processes of birth, contact with certain "holy" objects or places, utterance of certain "holy" words, such as the personal names of deity - because all these things were associated with "Mana" on account of their rather mysterious nature. "Taboo" does not necessarily mean absolute abstinence or avoidance in all these matters, but rather the exercise of the greatest care with respect to them, and, in the case of those which experience had led them to consider most dangerous, their reservation to men specially set aside as priests or cult functionaries.[15]

W. F. Albright has stated that this general conception of "Mana" and "Taboo" "survives in early Near-Eastern religion and mythology and remained dominant for millennia in magic."[16]

Our knowledge of the religious concepts of the ancient Near East is dependent on an interpretation of the many inscriptions which have been unearthed in that area. Although thousands have been deciphered and translated and their witness to the life and thought of the

---

[15]Cf. Gordis, op. cit., pp. 274-5.

[16]W. F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), 184.

people interpreted, there are, in many cases, differences of translation and of interpretation, and, without a first-hand knowledge of the texts, one is not always on the surest ground.[17]

Thorkild Jacobsen describes the "good life" of the Babylonian in terms of obedience to one's superiors in all the spheres of life in which a man lived his life.[18] Obedience was the keynote: first, he must be obedient to the older members of his own family; beyond that, he must be obedient to the overseer of his job and the officials of the community; beyond these still, he must be obedient to the king and the state.

There were also widening circles of deity. Every man or family had his own personal god who was interested in his welfare and sought his advancement. If he were sufficiently well served and powerful enough he could use his influence with the great deities who ruled the

---

[17] I have had to depend on translations of the texts such as: R. W. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament, (New York, Eaton and Mains, 1912); G. A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, (7th ed. rev.; Philadelphia, American Sunday School Union, 1937); C. F. Horne (ed.), Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East, (New York, Parke, Austin and Lipscomb, 1917), I and II; M. Jastrow, Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, (New York, Scribner's, 1914); J. H. Breasted, The Dawn of Conscience, (New York, Scribner's, 1933); and on interpretations of the culture of these countries, such as; Jastrow, op. cit.; Breasted, op. cit.; H. Frankfort, et al., The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1946); H. Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1948).

[18] T. Jacobsen, "Mesopotamia", in Frankfort, et al., Intellectual Adventure, pp. 202-208.

universe. To this personal god each man owed his worship and primary obedience.[19] Every man also had a job which was in some way connected with the estate of the temple of the city-state to which he belonged. The chief god of this temple was the god of the city-state, and he had numerous minor gods to supervise the work of the temple estate. The actual work was done by humans. In his job each man owed obedience to the human overseer of his task, but also to the minor god who supervised that part of the temple work.[20] Beyond this sphere again there was the national god who was appointed as such by the cosmic gods who also appointed the human king to fulfil his purposes in the land.

> When lofty Anu, king of the Anunnaki, and Enlil,
> lord of heaven and earth,
> who determine the destinies of the country,
> appointed Marduk, the first-born
> son of Enki, to execute the Enlil functions over
> the totality of the people, made him great
> among the Igigi, called Babylon by its exalted
> name, made it
> surpassingly great in the world, and firmly
> established for him in its
> midst an enduring kingship whose foundations are
> as firmly grounded as
> (those of) heaven and earth - then did Anu and
> Enlil call me to afford well-being to the
> people,
> me, Hammurabi, the obedient, godfearing prince,
> to cause righteousness to appear in the land,
> to destroy the evil and the wicked, that the
> strong might not harm the weak
> and that I rise like the sun over the black-
> headed people, lighting up the land.[21]

---

[19]Jacobsen, op. cit., p. 204.

[20]Ibid., pp. 187-8.

[21]Ibid., p. 193, trans. Jacobsen.

This quotation, standing as the introduction to Hammurabi's famous code of laws, would seem to indicate that obedience to the laws of the land constituted the good life and disobedience would be sin.

There is much comparatively lofty ethical ideal in Hammurabi's code. There are also certain hymns to the gods which require a lofty ethic of man and declare negation of such requirements to be sin. One of the hymns to Shamash, for instance, says:

> Him whose thought is directed to iniquity thou destroyest;
> Him also who unjustly endeavors to alter boundaries.
> The unjust judge thou restrainest through imprisonment.
> The one who accepts bribes, who does not guide justly, on him thou imposest sin.
> But he who does not accept bribes, whose concern is for the oppressed,
> Is pleasing to Shamash, his life shall be prolonged.
> The judge who tenders just decisions
> Will end in a palace, the habitation of princes will be his dwelling-place.[22]

But Jastrow notes that most of the hymns of this nature were actually attached as introductions to incantation lists and

> that the consequences of the expansion in the conceptions of the gods [i.e. to include ethical traits as well as the original attributes of strength and violence] were not drawn when it came to the actual cult.[23]

There continued a copious expression of the idea that sin was both a transgression on the sphere of the mysterious non-human power and a sort of contagion which resulted

---

[22]Jastrow, Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, 259.

[23]M. Jastrow, The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria, (Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1915), 259.

from such transgression. This non-human sphere was not so vague as in primitive ideas of "Mana", for it was the sphere of the gods, and it was definitely the gods who punished such transgressions. But there remains something of the same general idea.

> In the evil of the eclipse of the moon which in the month on the day has taken place,
> In the evil of the powers, of the portents, evil and not good,
> Which are in the palace and my land,
> Because of the evil magic, the disease that is not good, the iniquity,
> The transgression, the sin that is in my body . . . . . have I petitioned thee.[24]

prays an Assyrian to a star-deity.

There were so many deities - more than seven hundred listed in various inscriptions, and this may well be an incomplete count -[25] that it is well nigh impossible to know against which one a transgression had been committed. All that was assumed was that if some disaster had happened to a person or group a sin of some kind had happened. In such a situation a man repaired to the temple where

> the first thing incumbent upon the priest was to discover what the patient had done that was punishable by the superior powers. Since this investigation was generally rather hopeless, all possible sins, violations of tabus, and acts which might have brought revenge from gods, men or demons, were scrupulously listed and the patient freed from the effect of any one of them by the incantatory ritual which followed.[26]

---

[24] Sacred Books and Early Literature, I, 421.

[25] Albright, op. cit., p. 141.

[26] Albright, op. cit., pp. 173-4; cf. also Breasted, op. cit., p. 342.

There was no kind of certainty as to the specific deity offended or as to the nature of the offense.

It is perhaps not surprising that in the "Babylonian Confessions" or "Penitential Psalms" we hear again and again the refrain, "My sins I know not", and

> O god, whether known to me or unknown;
> O goddess, whether known to me or unknown;
> Forgive my transgressions.[27]

or

> I thought such things were pleasing to a god;
> what, however, seems good to oneself, to a god
> is displeasing.[28]

Even when a person was obedient to his own personal god or goddess he might find himself sinning against another with greater power and position than his own. One of the Penitential psalms records a number of deeds which it considers to involve their doers in sin and then expresses the belief that both they and their goddess who prompted them to the sins would suffer for them.[29] Another Assyrian prayer is addressed to Ishtar to free the penitent from his sin, because his strength is low and his power broken and his own god has turned his face away.[30] Jacobsen cites the case of the ravage of the city of Lagash by Lugalzagizzi, king of Umma. The inhabitants of the city blamed Lugalzagizzi's personal

---

[27] Sacred Books and Early Literature, I, 251-2; cf. also Jastrow, Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, 293-5.

[28] Sacred Books and Early Literature, p. 245.

[29] Barton, op. cit., p. 548.

[30] Sacred Books and Early Literature, pp. 425-6.

deity, the goddess Nidaba, and expected that she, as well as the king, would be punished for the sin against the gods of the universe.[31]

There is no question but that the priests did ascribe ethical character to some of the universal gods. There is also no question but that, in respect to the law of the land and the decrees of the king, disobedience to this highest representative of the universal and national gods was sin. Yet in the daily trials and sufferings, sicknesses and misfortunes of the people there was much of the sort of thought of sin which is reminiscent of the older primitive concept of "Mana". Johannes Hempel says, I believe correctly, that the Babylonian consciousness of sin loses itself

> in the darkness of the destruction of the relationship to an unknown god, [and] continues in the hollowness of an objective-material, magical feeling of self-involvement or contamination.[32]

The mood of Egyptian religion was less distrustful of man's position in the divine scheme of things and more certain of that which represented the will of the gods. H. Frankfort considers the Egyptian concept of "Maat" to be the most basic idea in the life of that people and describes it in this manner:

> that the universe is changeless and that all apparent opposites must, therefore, hold each other in equilibrium. . . . It puts a premium on whatever exists with a semblance of

---

[31] Jacobsen, in Intellectual Adventure, p. 204.

[32] Hempel, op. cit., pp. 185-6; translation mine.

> permanence. It excludes ideals of progress, utopias of any kind, revolutions, or any other radical changes in existing conditions.[33]

Since the king and his government represent that which exists with a semblance of permanence, and, moreover, since the king is a god, the god in earth,[34] obedience to the king and to the state constituted the "good life" and disobedience to these powers was sin.

This is declared specifically in a text of The Wisdom of Amenope which advises:

> Fight for his name; be pure for his life; and ye shall be free from (any) trace of sin. He whom the king has loved will be a revered (spirit), but there is no tomb for him who rebels against his majesty; his corpse shall be cast into the water. If ye do these things your bodies shall be sound. (So) shall ye find it forever.[35]

Likewise, as Dr. Budé has noted,[36] the Hebrew root for "sin" was used by the writer of one of the Amarna letters to describe his own state of being accused of an act of disloyalty to the Egyptian king.

In the Middle Kingdom period there had been both a sense of the importance of the individual and, at least in the famous Book of the Dead, a strongly moral concept of the "good life". The so-called "Negative

---

[33]Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, p. 64f.

[34]Cf. J. A. Wilson, "Egypt" in Frankfort, et al., Intellectual Adventure, p. 71.

[35]Ibid.; p. 86.

[36]E. F. Budé, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1915), 77-78.

Confession" is perhaps the best example of this. It was to be recited in the hall of judgement so that the person concerned "may be separated from every sin which he hath done and may behold the face of the gods".[37] It runs in part thusly:

> Homage to thee, O Great God, thou Lord of double Maati; I have come to thee, O my Lord, and I have brought myself hither that I may behold thy beauties. I know thee and I know thy name, and I know the names of the two and forty gods who exist with thee in the hall of the double Maati, who live as warders of sinners and who feed upon their blood on the day when the lives of men are taken into account in the presence of the god Un-nefer. . . . I have not done evil to mankind. I have not oppressed the members of my family, I have not wrought evil in the place of right and truth. I have had no knowledge of worthless men. . . . I have not made to be the first consideration of each day that excessive labor be performed for me. I have not brought forward my name for exaltation to honors. I have not ill-treated servants. I have not thought scorn of gods. . . . I have not caused pain. I have made no man to hunger. . . . I have done no murder. I have not given order for murder to be done for me. . . . I have not defrauded the temples of their oblations. I have not purloined the cakes of the gods. . . . I have not committed fornication. . . . I have not added to the weights of the scales to cheat the seller. . . . I have not snared the feathered fowl of the preserves of the gods. . . . I am pure. I am pure. I am pure.[38]

Breasted remarks that

> for the first time in the history of man the fully developed idea that the future destiny of the dead must be dependent entirely upon the ethical quality of earthly life[39]

was introduced here.

---

[37] Sacred Books and Early Literature, II, p. 256.

[38] Ibid., pp. 257-8. Translation by E.A.W. Budge.

[39] J. H. Breasted, A History of Egypt, (New York, Scribner's, 1909), 173.

Yet in the same Book of the Dead there is abundant evidence that successful passage through the dangers of the future world depended also on the ability to make use of certain secret magical charms to repel the demons and lesser gods which guarded the approaches to the final judgement hall.[40] E.A.W. Budge describes the Book of the Dead as

> a series of charms . . . to be rehearsed by the dead soul . . . to enable it to meet triumphantly all the dangers and obstacles to its journey in the underworld.[41]

The ethical quality introduced in this period, then, was still balanced by a non-moral relationship to the gods. The gods might require a clear record of ethical behaviour; they also required that a man repeat the proper ritual formulae at the proper time to gain entrance to the chamber of the gods.

In the later period of the Great Empire life came more and more to be regimented by the state and the temples. In addition to the necessary obedience to the king and his laws, there was added a necessary conformity to the rites and obligations of the powerful temple system.[42] The compensation for this stricter regulation

---

[40]Cf., for example, the incantation against the crocodile guarding one stream: "Get thee back, return, get thee back, thou crocodile-fiend, Sui; thou shalt not advance against me, for I live by reason of the magical words which I have by me." Sacred Books and Early Literature, II, 180.

[41]Ibid., p. 155; also Albright, op. cit., p. 172.

[42]Wilson, in Intellectual Adventure, p. 117.

of public life seems to have been a closer relationship of the individual to his personal god,[43] or the god of his particular locality.[44] From this god he sensed mercy and justice. In crying to him or her he could forget his own miseries.[45] Even so, his personal god was admittedly weaker than the great god of the central temple and to that god and to the king who represented him[46] his whole life was subject. Nelson and Wilson both point out that by the eleventh century, B.C., the Egyptian had turned his thoughts from the present to the glories of the past and to the expectation of the future life. The "good life" as it had been conceived did not bring satisfaction.

At the same time the Egyptian did not show much preoccupation with the idea of sin. Frankfort doubts whether any of the various Egyptian words for evil acts, disobedience which upsets his relationship to state and temple and brought punishment and unhappiness, should properly be translated as sin at all "if one grants that word its proper theological connotation."[47]

In a study of the basic features of Hittite religion, G. Furlani concludes that though "sin" is the

---

[43] Ibid., p. 117.

[44] H. H. Nelson, "The Egyptian Temple, with particular reference to the Theban Temples of the Empire Period," Biblical Archaeologist, VII (1944), 58.

[45] Wilson, op. cit., pp. 116-7. [46] Ibid.

[47] Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, p. 73.

breach of sacred law as apart from profane law, the king is viewed as "representative and vicar of the god on earth", so that there is no clear distinction between sacred and profane law.[48] In reality the breach of the laws of the land, set forth through state and temple, constituted sin in that culture.[49]

The excavations at Ras Shamra in 1928-29, and the various interpretations of the numerous texts found there since that time, have added considerably to our knowledge of the life of the Canaanites prior to the entry of Israel into that land after the Exodus. The mythological and ritual texts, particularly, have contributed to an understanding of the religion of Israel's neighbors in this early period of settlement.

The subject matter of the mythological texts is the loves, wars, and other activities of the various gods and goddesses of the pantheon.[50] There was a central

---

[48]G. Furlani, "The Basic Aspect of Hittite Religion", Harvard Theological Review, XXXI (1938), 251ff.

[49]This is more clearly stated in the text studied by Furlani in this article than in any other Near Eastern text. There is no question that in other features of religious belief there was much in common with other Semitic religions.

[50]Albright, op. cit., pp. 175-8, outlines the pantheon. J. C. Simpson divides the deities into two families: Dagon, his son Baal and daughter Anath; El, his wife Asherah and son Mot; the two families were at enmity with each other. This from mimeographed notes of a course: "Early Religious Ideas of the Hebrews" given at Oriel College, Oxford, in 1946, by J. C. Simpson. Access to these notes was obtained through the courtesy of Rev. T. Bailey, Vancouver, B.C.

story which described the death, rebirth and marriage of the god Baal. This story was associated with the cycle of nature with the cessation of vegetation in the fall, the coming of rains in the winter, the growth of grasses, flowers and fruits in the spring and summer.

There is one text which lists the various sacrifices, among them almost every type of sacrifice later to be found in the Priestly Code of the Old Testament.[51] There are also a number of ritual texts which associate the sacrifices with the cult acts of the Canaanites. The purpose of the cult seems to have been to try to control, or even to coerce, the gods of nature into a benevolent attitude toward the worshippers and their undertakings. From an antiphonal psalm, reproduced and discussed in the Journal of Biblical Literature in 1936,[52] J. Obermann shows how a "bull for the King" and a "sheep for the people" were sacrificed while the people invoked the blessing and help of El upon them. From another ritual text, translated in the same periodical in 1934,[53] Barton shows how the people went through a pantomime of pruning the vines while Mot, the god of death, sat sullenly by and then offered a sacrifice in

---

[51] Cf. W.O.E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), 60ff.

[52] J. Obermann, "An Antiphonal Psalm from Ras Shamra", JBL, LV (March 1936), p. 40.

[53] G. A. Barton, "A Liturgy for the Celebration of the Spring Festival at Jerusalem in the Age of Abraham and Melchizedek", JBL, LIII (April 1934), 69, 73.

order to ensure the fertility of the vines for the season.[54] In the same text is given the ritual, presently enacted by the sacred prostitutes, to ensure fertility to human families. In this ritual also there was an accompanying sacrifice.

But in all these texts there is little that can be said, except by implication, about the concept of sin. It may be implied that sin would be omission of any of the ritual acts or the sacrifices required in the cult. But beyond this it is difficult to go.

There is listed among the sacrifices cited, both the 'ishsheh (אשה) and the hattā'th (חטאת) of the Old Testament. The former refers to offences against either deity or man which can be compensated by an offering. The latter is definitely listed as a sacrifice, so that it cannot be regarded as a simple money-payment such as it seems to be in II Kings 12:17. But its measure is not elaborated.[55]

There are some references in the various texts which reflect a high ethical ideal as far as humans are concerned. The noble king, Danel, is said to judge the cause of the widow and the case of the orphan,[56] and

---

[54] The particular sacrifice in slaying a kid in milk which is specifically prohibited in the Old Testament, Ex. 34:26. Cf. Barton, ERE, op. cit., p. 69.

[55] Oesterley believes the "hattā'th" here was not expiatory "in the sense in which it is used in post-exilic times", Sacrifices in Ancient Israel, p. 83.

[56] Cf. H. L. Ginsberg, "Ugaritic Studies and the Bible", Biblical Archaeologist, VIII (1945), 50.

the son of King Keret gives his father some noble advice in the same vein:

> Thou shouldst judge the cause of the widow, adjudicate the case of him that is in anguish of spirit. Thou shouldst deliver the poor man from his oppressors, shouldst feed the fatherless before thee and the widow behind thy back.[57]

In the text which Obermann discussed there is one attribute of El given which suggests nobility of character, i.e. "justice" (𐎎𐎍𐎊). Obermann relates this to Hebrew צֶדֶק = "right", "veritable", "honest". The root of this derived form is, of course, צָדַק = "to be firm, established". The real meaning of the epithet applied to El is too questionable to be used as evidence for believing that the Canaanites attributed ethical qualities to their gods[58] and the evidence of the myths themselves would belie such a belief.[59] There is little reason for the idea that noble ethical behaviour was commanded by or desired by the gods and goddesses even though it was evidently valued by the people themselves.

It seems to me that we may summarize the features of Near Eastern religions which have to do with the concept of sin in this fashion.

---

[57]Ginsberg, op. cit., p. 50.

[58]Obermann recognizes this when we says: "Our present knowledge of the strikingly profuse Ugaritic vocabulary is woefully limited, to be sure. What the enumerated qualifications of El convey we may only surmise with greater or lesser accuracy." op. cit., p. 37.

[59]Cf. Ginsberg, op. cit., pp. 50,52.

There was a great multiplicity of gods personifying various powers of nature. The many phenomena of nature, both those that were regular and could be more or less counted upon and those that were irregular and sometimes cataclysmic, were considered to be manifestations of the benevolence or malevolence of these gods. Even where these gods and goddesses had been arranged in a definite hierarchy of higher and lower orders of deity they were not always thought of as remaining subject to one another, and it was more or less regular practice to worship more than one god and to consider some of them as powerful against others in particular spheres.

As far as the regular processes of nature were concerned there developed a ritual mythology and practice related to the cycle of the seasons. In Babylon, for instance, this was manifest in the annual New Year's Festival which celebrated the "renewal of the generative force of nature" and in ceremonies relating to the phases of the moon. In Egypt it related to the rise of the Nile River and to the end of its flooding.[60] In Canaan, as we have just noted, it followed the cycles of the crops.

Moreover, in Babylonia, Egypt and the Hittite kingdom, and probably in Canaan, the king was considered to be either a demi-god himself or the representative

---

[60]Frankfort et al., Intellectual Adventure, 364.

of the gods in earth. Therefore, in the state, and at some periods also in the temple, his commandment was the will of the gods.

In all these respects life was fairly regularly ordered and sin was any breach of this order or any failure to maintain it in all its various requirements, whether in temple ritual and sacrifice or in the affairs of the state.

But in the irregular processes of nature - storms, earthquake, disease and plague striking one family or person, sudden accidents, and the like - the regular cult had little part. Moreover, in the private affairs of an individual - his desires to be avenged on a hated neighbor, his particular business ventures, his family distresses - the national cult and the affairs of state had little impact. In these areas there remained beliefs and practices which involved demons, personal gods and goddesses, sympathetic magic, and other aspects of the old "Mana" concept, despite the fact that the religion of these peoples in its general public expression had long outgrown any undifferentiated concept of "Mana" as a major factor.[61]

---

[61]It is not our province to delve into the idea of sin in early Greek thought. But it is interesting to note the conclusions of a study of "The Confession of Sins in the Classics" by Raffaele Pettazoni in Harvard Theological Review, XXX (Jan. 1937), 1-14: "The evidences of confession so far examined are supplied by classic writers, but the confessional practices attested by them belong neither to Greek nor to Roman religion, but to the various Oriental religions", p. 9.

CHAPTER III

THE COVENANT IN THE HEBREW CONCEPT OF SIN

Before we turn to a study of the many passages, even in the earliest sources of the Old Testament, which throw direct light on the concept of sin held by the Hebrews, we must first consider the idea of "covenant" in Hebrew thought and the specific nature of the Mosaic covenant which was a determinative influence in her religious thought and practice. It is true that the book of Genesis deals with the life of the Hebrews before this event. But it is also true that all the sources which deal with this period reached their present form long after the event. Even such early materials as the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5), the Blessing of Jacob (Gen. 49), the Blessing of Moses (Deut. 33), the Oracles of Balaam (in Num. 23-24), the early historical record in II Samuel 1-20 and the J strand of Genesis, all originated in literary form from two to five centuries after the Exodus. Though they may preserve in part earlier oral materials they will have subjected them to the thought of their own period or, at least, will have given them the stamp of their own approval by their preservation of them.

We turn now to a consideration of this covenant thought in Israel.

> . . . according to primitive belief an ego exists only in identity with a great-ego, i.e., the group. A man alone has no blessing at all, he must be a member of a brotherhood and stand within a covenant that upholds him."[1]

The Old Testament reflects this belief in an attitude which H. Wheeler Robinson has termed "corporate personality". By this term it is meant that a person was thought to be involved in a spirit or soul (נֶפֶשׁ) which was common to each member of the group and to the group as a whole. It was usually more or less confined to the family group, though it was sometimes extended to the whole national group of Israel.[2] This underlying attitude finds its expression in the Old Testament narratives most often in terms of the punishment of sin. Thus, Achan's sin (Josh. 7:24) was punished not only by his own destruction but also by that of all "his sons and his daughters, his oxen and his asses, his sheep and his tent, and all that he had." Likewise, Saul's sin in neglecting to observe the covenant which had been made with the Gibeonites could be punished by killing seven of his descendants (II Sam. 21). This involves the idea that the offending soul (נֶפֶשׁ) belonged to the whole

---

[1] E. G. Kraeling, "The Real Religion of Ancient Israel", JBL, XLVII (1928), 136.

[2] H. W. Robinson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality", Beiheft, Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXVI (1936), p.49.

group and its offence could not be wiped out except by destroying the whole group. Even the practice of Levirate marriage points to a sense of family unity by which a brother's offspring may be considered to serve as the continuity of the dead man's name. Many other illustrations could be given,[3] but the general idea is commonly enough accepted to need no special pleading.

The Israelite thus early thought of the individual only in relationship to the group to which he belonged. There is no place in the Old Testament for the person who stands outside the group. Such isolation only shows that something has gone wrong with the man's life and that he is failing.[4] Strength of life, on the other hand, is present when a person is at one with his group, or, in the more purely religious sense, with his God. The Hebrew language expresses this perfect relationship with the word "shalom" (שָׁלוֹם),[5] which may be variously translated as "prosperity", "peace", "wholeness", "welfare", or a number of other terms which reflect a perfect community life. It is the state that is thought to have existed

---

[3]e.g. Gen. 20:7,17 where all of Abimelech's household is threatened with punishment for his sin; II Sam. 3:29 where Joab's whole house is cursed for the sin of one member; I Ki. 14:10, 16:3, where all of Jeroboam's male offspring and Baasha and his whole family are killed for their individual sins.

[4]Pedersen, Israel, I, 263-4.

[5]Ibid., p. 311 for examples of how this root is used.

between David and his God[6] in the minds of his biographers. Staples points out that the pi'el of the verb from the same stem is used regularly to denote the paying back of a debt or the compensation for something wrongfully taken, both of which would restore the relationship of peace between the persons involved.

The most natural group within which this 'shalem' will exist is, of course, the immediate family or tribal circle. There it is frequently expressed in terms of common blood or flesh. If the Bedouin tribal member is wounded or killed, his tribal relatives consider that their common blood has been spilled.[7] The Hebrews expressed kinship with each other in the sentence "I am your flesh and bone" (Judg. 9:2; II Sam. 5:1). Whatever might be the mode of expressing it, within the immediate family there was a natural covenant of peace.

Beyond the family group, however, the natural relationship would be either neutral or, more probably, hostile. Different tribes of nomads desired the same well for watering their animals, or the same pasturage for feeding them. A relationship of 'shalem' in this sphere could be established only by an explicit covenant between them,[8] and the relationship would be

---

[6] I Ki. 11:4, 15:3, et al.

[7] Smith, Religion of the Semites, 40ff., 274.

[8] Badé, op. cit., p. 76; Cf. A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament, (ed. from author's notes by S.D.F. Salmond; New York, Scribner's, 1909), 239.

preserved only by the fulfilment of that covenant. There are numerous illustrations of this in the pages of the Old Testament.

When Isaac moved into the valley of Gerar and began to dig out the wells which Abraham had dug earlier he ran into constant strife over their use and possession with the shepherds of Gerar. When eventually he did establish himself firmly at one of these situations and began to prosper, the king of Gerar and his tribesmen came to him and asked for a covenant. "And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace (shalom, שָׁלוֹם)" (Gen. 26:31).[9] This covenant seems to have been with respect to the use of a well.

Another covenant, which seems to have respect to a mutual boundary between two groups, is that between Jacob and Laban. When Laban overtook Jacob and his family in their flight from him at Haran, Laban was at first disposed to demand the return of certain possessions, including his daughters. But he ultimately asked, instead, a covenant between the two groups. To this Jacob and Laban proceeded. They set up a pile of stone and a pillar as witnesses to their covenant, but also as a boundary between them.

> This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and

---

[9]A similar story, probably a variant of the same event, is told of Abimelech and Abraham in Gen. 21:22ff.

> that thou wilt not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. (Gen. 31:52).

Different groups also seem to have made covenants to intermarry with each other. This is illustrated negatively in the frequent prohibition to the Israelites to enter into any covenants with the Canaanites "lest thou sacrifice unto their gods, . . . and thou eat of their sacrifices, and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons".[10] It is illustrated also in the account of the arrangements which the Israelites made to enable the cursed Benjamites to get wives of the Israelite women. Though no covenant is specifically mentioned, it was to "proclaim peace (shālōm)" that they went and spoke to Benjamin, and it was immediately after that Benjamin returned and married their daughters (Judg. 21:13-14).

Jacob's servitude with Laban for Rachel and Leah and the agreement of the Shechemites to submit to circumcision in order to be allowed to intermarry with the Hebrews also suggest covenants to this end. R. R. Marrett claims that such covenants involving the marriage of women-folk was the earliest form of covenant beyond the blood-covenant of the tribe itself.[11]

The relationships of a strong invader of a land and the weaker inhabitants of the land were sometimes established by covenants rather than warfare. The

---

[10] Ex. 34:15; 23:32; Deut. 7:2; Judg. 2:2.

[11] R. R. Marrett, Sacraments of Simple Folk, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933), 161ff.

Gibeonites sought and obtained a covenant with Joshua and his men to save themselves from destruction. Even when the Hebrews discovered they had been deceived they considered themselves bound by the covenant they had made (Josh. 9). When Nahash of Ammon stood on the borders of Jabesh-Gilead the inhabitants asked for a covenant rather than death. He agreed, though the terms of it were too arduous for immediate compliance and the Gileadites ultimately fought it out with the help of all Israel (I Sam. 11).

Military alliances were also thought of as covenants. The confederation of kings in Genesis 14 is so called, and David's relationship with Abner whereby Abner was to use his influence to bring Israel onto David's side is also so called (II Sam. 3:12ff).

In each case, whether with respect to the use of wells or pastures, or to the establishing of mutual boundaries, or to arranging marriages, or to setting down the relationship of conqueror to conquered, or to establishing mutual aid for military purposes, or even just to declare personal friendship and mutual good-will,[12] the covenant was the guarantor of that status which was peace (shalom) and, therefore, strength. It created the rights and duties of the persons or groups affected with reference to each other.

---

[12]Such as that between David and Jonathan (I Sam. 18:3).

For our discussion it is important to note that the maintenance of this covenant by both parties was the right and proper action, and breach of this covenant was the wrong and improper action. Acting within the covenant would ensure "שָׁלוֹם", which was peace and prosperity and strength. Acting outside the covenant, or in such a way as to violate it, would result in "wickedness" and "evil" which was discord, poverty and general weakness. Breaking the covenant, therefore, is "sin" in any given situation.

W. E. Staples has marshalled a considerable number of passages from the early sources of the Old Testament to support his contention that "sin" in these sources is the state of being in an inferior position to someone else or of being in a state of debt toward them.[13] I believe that many of these passages support equally well this understanding of sin, that it is the breach of a covenanted relationship.

"What is my trespass? what is my sin? that thou hast hotly pursued me?" Jacob asked Laban (Gen. 31:36) when Laban overtook him in obvious anger. After Laban searched his tents and baggage and failed to find anything of his own, Jacob proceeded to defend himself by showing that he had always fulfilled every obligation of their mutual relationship and had made good even every unintentional breach of it.[14] He could not, therefore, be

---

[13]Cf. Staples, op. cit., pp. 67ff.

[14]The verb used of making good such losses is the pi'el of שָׁלַם, i.e. to make whole, to restore peace.

considered a sinner. Laban acknowledged this and proceeded to renew their former relationship of peace.

The Hebrews in Goshen had a particular relationship with the Pharaoh and his people. This relationship involved the enslavement of the Hebrews to make bricks for the building of store-cities. After they had sought permission to go into the desert to make sacrifices the Pharaoh commanded his taskmasters to cease providing straw for the making of bricks. This resulted eventually in punishment for failure to fulfil former quotas. The elders of Israel complained to Pharaoh:

> Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us: make brick; and behold, thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people.[15]

Staples translates this: "thy servants are smitten, so thy people have sinned". In a footnote he notes that the translation in the Septuagint and in Symmachus point the sin to Pharaoh and remarks that "modern translators have blindly followed suit". He believes that the Rabbinic translation "Thy people have sinned" is correct, and interprets this to mean that the sin is the Israelites' and that it consists of their inferiority before Pharaoh.

Even if the Rabbinic reconstruction of the Hebrew is correct this might still mean that the sin is that of the people of Pharaoh. It seems to me that the only ground on which the Hebrew elders could have appealed to

---

[15] Exod. 5:15-16. The Hebrew is חָטָאת עַמְּךָ .

Pharaoh against their hard lot would be on the basis that his officers were breaking the normal relationship between Hebrews and Egyptians and that if Pharaoh were informed of it he might command a lighter load. They would hardly accuse Pharaoh himself of sinning against them, but they might readily have accused his officers of doing so without his knowledge. His answer, of course, indicated that his will was one with that of his men.

Grammatically, the second person throughout this passage refers to Pharaoh and, though the Hebrews might well call themselves Pharaoh's servants, it is not likely that they would call themselves his people. There is no other instance of them calling themselves the people of any other than Yahweh or of a Hebrew person.[16] Throughout the rest of this particular narrative there is a careful distinction made between "my" (i.e. Yahweh's) people and "thy" (i.e. Pharaoh's) people.[17]

The sin which is charged is, I believe, the sin of the taskmasters and people of Pharaoh in breaking the regular relationship of the Hebrews to the Egyptians by requiring more of them than was normal or, indeed, even possible.

In the E account of the jailing of the butler and baker of the Pharaoh, we are told only that "Pharaoh was

---

[16]That is, e.g., "Moses' people", "My people", etc.

[17]Cf. Exod. 7-9; e.g. 7:26,28; 8:17,18; et al.

wroth with his two officers . . . and he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard". They had "offended" (i.e. "sinned against")[18] their master. Staples seems to assume that since no more than this is told us their sin must have consisted simply in their inferiority to the Pharaoh. Yet a brief summary of Joseph's own case would not sound different. Joseph was accused of offending Pharaoh; Pharaoh was angry and imprisoned him. But we know that there was far more substance than this to the alleged sin of Joseph. It may well be that there was more to the sins of the butler and baker. In some way they had overstepped the proper relationship of a butler and a baker to a Pharaoh.[19]

Every person lived in a condition in which, either by a covenant expressly made or by the nature of one's station in life, he had certain obligations to others. The "sinner" is the one who fails to fulfil these obligations. He thereby places himself in "debt" to the "righteous"[20] ones within the covenant, and in that respect

---

[18]Gen. 40:1. Hebrew = חָטְאוּ .

[19]Cf. Pedersen, Israel, I, p. 417.

[20]The term צַדִּיק designates the innocent and righteous party in any breach of a covenant and the term רָשָׁע designates the guilty or unrighteous one. Cf. Pedersen, Israel, I, pp. 417-8; W. Eichrodt, Theologie des alten Testaments, (Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1939), I, 81-82; Schultz, Old Testament Theology, II, p. 285; H. W. Robinson, The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, (New York, Scribner's, 1913), 168.

Staples is correct. If his failure to fulfil the covenant has endangered the whole group they may wipe out his life; otherwise his debt might be claimed by fine or by restoration.

Even though the Gibeonites had misrepresented the facts in order to gain a covenant with Israel, the elders of Israel clearly considered that it would not be right for them to have broken it. Indeed, when Israel suffered a famine in the days of David, he considered it a punishment for the slaughter of the Gibeonites by Saul in contravention of that covenant and made atonement to the Gibeonites on the terms they asked - the deliverance to them of seven of Saul's descendants to be hanged in Gibeah (II Sam. 21:1-9).

When the covenant which David had made with Abner was broken by Joab's killing of Abner, David clearly considered it to be sin, but disassociated himself from the sin of it. "I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord forever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner; let it fall upon the head of Joab" (II Sam. 3:28-29).

Even in the covenant of friendship between David and Jonathan, when David was suffering persecution at the hands of Saul and complained to Jonathan he said: "deal kindly with thy servant, for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee; but if there be in me iniquity ('ăwōn), slay me thyself" (I Sam. 20:8). David could see no breach of his relationship within the

covenant, but perceives that Jonathan may see such and is ready to accept the penalty of it, which he considers to be death.

The covenant establishes the rights and duties of those within it, and the covenant supports, upholds and strengthens the group or members of the group who fulfil its obligations and accept its rights. Sin is the breach of the covenant and results in an abrogation of the rights and a weakening of the group or members of the group which fails to fulfil its obligations. If this be understood then even those references which seem to indicate that sin is little more than a break with custom gain greater meaning. "It is not so done in Israel"[21] may well have reference to what is required of Israelites within the covenant, and, though one could presuppose it with reference to all within the covenant, one could not presuppose it with reference to foreigners. In the same way, though murder might constitute a breach of the covenant if committed against another member of the group, it would not be so understood if committed against an outsider, say an enemy person or group.

In most, if not all, such covenants between men or groups of men, the deity was invoked to see that the covenant obligations were upheld and to ensure the operation

---

[21] Gen. 20:9; 34:7; II Sam. 13:12. Cf. Schultz, op. cit., II, p. 281; K. Kurtz, The Religion of the Old Testament, trans. G. A. Bienemann (London, Williams and Norgate, 1907), 115-6; both for the usual view of these passages.

of the covenant for the good of the party or parties which upheld it. This was undoubtedly done to bring the lesser covenant into the area of the larger covenant between god and men. Eli warned his sons that "If one man sin against another, God shall judge him" (I Sam. 2:25).[22] In the covenant which Laban and Jacob made with each other to recognize a mutual boundary (Gen. 31:44ff), the deities of both groups were invoked: the god of Abraham representing the Hebrews and the god of Nahor representing the Aramaeans.[23]

Thus, it seems clear that such human covenants presuppose a prior covenant between a man or a group of men and their god.[24] It is the strength which such a covenant gives a man and a group which enables him to enter into successful covenants with other men, members of his own group or another.

That Israel's nationhood began with such a covenant is the witness of all the sources of the Pentateuch, early and late.[25] Undoubtedly a basic feature of this

---

[22]All quotations from the Old Testament, unless otherwise noted, will be from The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text, ed. Max L. Margolis (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917).

[23]The additional phrase "the god of their father", which is omitted in at least two LXX MSS, was apparently added in an attempt to identify the two gods as one. The verb "judge" in Hebrew is plural. Cf. S. R. Driver, Genesis, (London, Methuen, 1909), p. 289.

[24]Cf. Badé, op. cit., p. 76.

[25]W. A. Irwin, reviewing Smith's Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, in Journal of Near Eastern

covenant was the joining together of the tribes concerned into an "amphictiony" for the purpose of defending one another and of invading the land of Palestine.[26] But the narratives of Exodus 19-34 represent it as more than this. It was also a covenant between Yahweh and this new group. By this covenant Yahweh took the group to be his "own treasure from among all peoples" and made it "a holy nation" (Exod. 19:5-6). By it the group accepted this new status and accepted the obligations involved in it. Henceforth the strength of the nation would depend on its fulfilling these obligations, and failure to fulfil them would result in weakness.

The new status is here described as the peculiar relationship in which the people became the "possession" (treasure) of Yahweh and a "holy" people.

One of the most characteristic attributes of deity in Semitic thought is "holiness". The etymology of the word is not altogether clear,[27] but the use of the word and its cognates, both in the Old Testament and in earlier Semitic literature, shows that it is related to

---

Studies, (April 1946), 157ff., points out that the "idea of the covenant is absent from the long prior sources in Judges and Samuel," and considers the "vogue of making the covenant basic in Israel's religious thinking" "unfortunate".

[26]Cf. Meek, Hebrew Origins, pp. 34-36; also K. Budde, The Religion of Israel to the Exile, (New York, Putnam's, 1899), 57ff.

[27]Cf. Snaith, Distinctive Ideas, pp. 21-34.

the general area of "mana-taboo".[28] What is "holy" is of the very nature of deity and is therefore dangerous when approached by humans. In Canaan and Mesopotamia the root "qdsh" (קדש) is used of "the supra-human Otherness",[29] that is, of the whole mysterious world beyond the control and understanding of man. It originally would be equal to "Mana", though, as their religions developed toward a polytheism with gods who were personalized, it came to be associated only with the nature of the gods and the possessions of those gods - temples, sacred vessels, priests, etc.

In Israel, since the covenant established Yahweh as the only God of Israel and Israel became his "holy" people, the root came to be used only of the nature of Yahweh and of those things, persons and actions which were his possessions.

Several features significant for the understanding of the concept of sin amongst the Hebrews at all periods follow from this basic idea of "holiness" recognized by the covenant relationship. First, Yahweh himself is holy and thus unapproachable by his people unless they have kept themselves holy or purified themselves in some manner (Cf. Ex. 19: 10-16, JB). Secondly,

---

[28]Cf. H. W. Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946), 53.

[29]Cf. Snaith, op. cit., p. 51.

anything which belongs peculiarly to Yahweh partakes of his holiness and will be defended by him against appropriation or use by any other than himself or those specifically set apart by him for that purpose. Thirdly, any covenant made by Yahweh with specific individuals within his people makes that covenant position holy and it, too, will be defended against usurpation by others. Likewise any covenant made by members of Yahweh's holy people in his name with other persons will be defended by Yahweh because they have partaken of his holiness. Also, an oath or a curse uttered in his name carries the power of his personality with it and will be defended.

There are many illustrations of these results of "holiness" in the early sources of the Old Testament. When Uzzah put forth his hand to keep the ark of Yahweh from falling to the ground as it was being transported up to Jerusalem the anger of Yahweh blazed against him and he was struck dead (II Sam. 6:7). He had trespassed on the property of Yahweh and was destroyed "for his error". Likewise, when the men of Beth-Shemesh gazed upon the ark after it had been returned from its captivity amidst the Philistines they were struck dead (I Sam. 6:19). Ahimelech hesitated to allow David and his men to take of the shew-bread of the sanctuary at Nob because it was "not ordinary bread" (I Sam. 21:4). It had been given to Yahweh and would be defended by Yahweh against profane use. Only when David assured Ahimelech that he and his

men were properly sanctified to receive such bread did Ahimelech let him have it. Then Achan took some of the booty of the city of Jericho, when all that city had been devoted to Yahweh, he and all his possessions and his family were destroyed for his sin. (Josh. 7). When the Philistines captured the ark of Yahweh in battle and took it with them to their own cities, Yahweh defended his possession and his own "holiness" by toppling the god-images of the Philistines from their places in their own sanctuaries. Moreover he smote the people with plague until they recognized their guilt and sent his ark back to the Hebrews (I Sam. 5-6).

In all these events we see the holiness of Yahweh defending those things which belonged uniquely to himself from appropriation by others. Moreover, if Yahweh appointed someone to a place of leadership, that leadership was defended by Yahweh against other contenders.

When Aaron and Miriam rebelled against the authority of Moses (Num. 12:1ff), that rebellion was accounted sin by the E writer. Miriam was struck with leprosy as a punishment for their sin. This was the sin also of the people in general on more than one occasion during the wandering in the wilderness (Cf. Num. 11:1; 14:1ff; et al) and on each occasion the anger of Yahweh demonstrated itself in some form of visitation. This was the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram when they offered "strange fire" to Yahweh. The preface to the test

(Num. 16:1-3, 28-30) specifically defines it in terms of their challenge to his particular status of "holiness" as leader of the "holy people". It seems to me that potential challenge to the position of a constituted leader of Yahweh's people is also the "sin" to which Bath-Sheba refers, in fear, to David on his death-bed. She saw that Adonijah was about to declare himself king in David's stead and knew that, in that event:

> it shall come to pass when my lord, the king, shall sleep, I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders [will be sinners] (I Ki. 1:21).

W. E. Staples takes this to "mean only that they would occupy inferior positions".[30] Yet we know it to be almost regular Semitic practice, well attested in the Old Testament, for newly-enthroned rulers to count all other possible claimants as threats to their right to rule. Such potential claimants were considered in precisely the same light as if they had actually conspired to usurp the throne. Surely the knowledge of this custom is as legitimate an interpretation of Bath-Sheba's fear that she and Solomon would be counted "sinners" as that of Staples. They would, by their very presence alive, be violators of the new king's position amongst the covenanted people.[31]

---

[30]Cf. Staples, "Some Aspects of Sin in the Old Testament", op. cit., p. 67. In this article Staples argues almost exclusively for defining the content of sin in the early sources as a position of being inferior or in debt. We shall refer to it again.

[31]Cf. I Ki. 2:25 (Solomon's own actions); 15:27-29 (Baasha's); 16:10ff (Zimri's); II Ki. 10 (Jehu's

We have noted also that oaths or curses made in the name of Yahweh would be defended by him and any violation of such would be considered sin.[32] There are a number of examples of this in the early sources.

When Saul was leading his forces against the Philistines near the beginning of his rule (I Sam. 14: 24ff) the people were distressed at the preliminary victories of the enemy and Saul uttered a curse against any of his people who should eat any food before sundown. Jonathan, not aware of his father's curse and faint from the ardours of battle, ate some honey which he found. When Yahweh did not answer Saul's questions that evening Saul knew that something had been done to cause Yahweh to withdraw his support of the group and assumed that the oath he had made had been broken. By sacred lot Jonathan was indicated as the violator of the curse and Saul was prepared to kill him, his own son, to wipe out the taint of sin which had been incurred. The people intervened[33]

---

rather complete purge of all possible claimants to the throne); et al.

[32]There is also the implicit idea that the spoken word is the extension of the personality of the speaker and carries with it his own power. Cf. Pedersen, Israel, II (1940), p. 450, where he declares that the oath was sacred to the Hebrew community because the community was made up of "psychic values" and the oath was the uttered form of all the individual's psychic power.

[33]There is another sin noted in this account. The people, after sundown and the expiry of the power of the curse, began to eat of the slaughtered animals with the blood still in them, a breach of dietary law (Cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:10-14). No punishment was ordered. Frazer, Golden Bough, pp. 337-8, points out that this taboo was not strictly enforced amongst early peoples.

and Jonathan was saved, but the account shows that Jonathan had sinned because he had transgressed against the "holiness" of a curse.

In Numbers 32:2ff we are told that Moses granted to the tribes of Reuben and Gad a portion of the Trans-Jordan territory on condition that they should first help in the invasion of Canaan proper. They accepted the condition, to which they undoubtedly swore in some sort of covenant. Then Moses added the solemn warning:

> But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord; and know ye your sin will find you out.

In Judges 19-21 there is an account of the crime of the Benjamites against the Levite and the anger of the rest of the tribes of Israel at the outrage. The result was the destruction of most of the Benjamites and the routing of the tiny remnant of six hundred or so. Chapter 21 tells us that the tribes gathered in Mizpah and swore an oath not to give any of their daughters to these remaining Benjamites. But apparently when they realized what this hasty oath meant - that Benjamin would cease to exist as a tribe in Israel - they repented and desired to find some way out of their dilemma. There are two parallel accounts of how they got around the oath without technically breaking it. The first (21:7-12) tells how they counted up the tribes that had gathered and sworn the oath and discovered that Jabesh-Gilead had not been present. So they dispatched a party of warriors to smite the Jabesh-

Gileadites and to bring back enough virgin wives for the remnant of the Benjamites. The other (21:13-23) tells how they informed the Benjamites of a vineyard festival at Shiloh at which the maidens of Israel danced and suggested to them that they lie in wait and seize each a maiden and make off with her. In that way the Benjamites would gain wives from Israel without involving Israel in the sinfulness of breaking an oath.

> For the children of Israel had sworn, saying: "Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin" (21:18), but neither did ye [Israel] give them unto them [Benjamin], that ye should now be guilty (21:22).

The story is an interesting one from any point of view. In respect to the concept of sin held at this time it shows that the people believed that if they transgressed upon the "holiness" of a curse or an oath they would be infected with guilt, the objective form of sin, even if the whole group which had uttered the curse or oath had unanimously repented of its utterance. Yahweh defends the word uttered in his name because it then belongs to him and partakes of his nature.

According to the covenant, then, Israel becomes the "holy people" of Yahweh and he defends his own holiness and their holiness strongly and jealously. This is true of the people as a whole and it is true of individuals within the covenant. J. Pedersen, in his monumental study of the psychology which lies behind the thought of the Old Testament, notes that the strength or

weakness of the "soul"[34] depended on the support of man by God or the lack of it.[35] A strong soul implies the continual support of God in a man's life. A weak soul is the result of the lack of such support, or the active invasion of the spirit of God into a man's life for evil.

Undoubtedly this belief in man's subjection to the power of invasive "spirits" was originally associated with the belief in the demons and gods that inhabited the unknown world of the Semites in great numbers. There are even vestiges of this belief in such beings left in certain Old Testament references,[36] but for the most part the Old Testament attributes all invasive spirits to Yahweh alone, even though this involves the attribution of evil spirits as well as good ones to him.[37]

Thus Yahweh supports the judges whom he raises up to lead his people with his "spirit" (רוּחַ).[38] In one instance, on the other hand, he sent an "evil spirit"

---

[34]The "soul" is considered to be the total life of the individual or group and its strength or weakness is reflected in its prosperity, health and success as well as in its moral and religious uprightness or the lack of the same.

[35]Israel, I, 336, 339, 416, 428.

[36]Cf. H. W. Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, p. 74, where he refers to "'Azazel" and "Lilith", Lev. 16:8ff and Isa. 34:14, as examples. Cf. also G. A. Barton, "Demons and Spirits (Hebrew)", ERE, IV, 594-601.

[37]In the last analysis, of course, the spirits are "good" or "evil" only from man's point of view. They all are Yahweh's agents to fulfil his purposes.

[38]Cf. Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; et al.

> between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech; that the violence done to the three-score and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and that their blood might be laid upon Abimelech their brother . . . (Judg. 9:23-24).

In this case the "spirit" was directed against the strength of the group and they fought against each other. They had broken the covenant and had undercut their source of strength.

The prophetic activity of Saul was likewise considered to be due directly to a seizure by the spirit of Yahweh (I Sam. 10:10; 19-23). While he was king acceptable to Yahweh the spirit of Yahweh upheld him but after his rejection by Yahweh and the anointing of David in his stead as king:

> the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrified him (16:14).

But when David was chosen by Yahweh in place of Saul

> the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward (16:13).

On the other hand, when Yahweh was angry with his people (and presumably with David as their leader) "he moved David against them" so that he took a census of all the people. David soon realized that this move had been a sin against Yahweh. The punishment for the sin, which fell upon the people, was not stayed until David, himself, had bought and paid for a site for an altar, an alter and a sacrifice, and had offered the sacrifice to Yahweh. But, according to our author, it was Yahweh who had moved David

to this sin. Yahweh was angry with his people (we are not told why), and he weakened his people by sending a sinful impulse into David's leadership. He would not uphold a sinful people and sought a way to punish them.[39]

In I Kings 22:18ff the prophet Micaiah gives us a glimpse into the manner in which Yahweh does weaken his people when they rebel against him. Ahab was determined to go up to Ramoth-Gilead though it is clearly doubtful even in his mind and Jehoshaphat's whether it is Yahweh's will. Yahweh therefore sends a "lying spirit" into the mouths of the court-prophets to deceive Ahab and lead him further into a perilous situation where he will be destroyed.

Yahweh thus supported his holy people, and particularly those specified for leadership of his holy people, with his spirit. If his people, or any one of them, sinned against the holiness of Yahweh, Yahweh weakened them either by withdrawing his supporting spirit from them or by sending an evil spirit into their midst. Perhaps the classic statement of the case is in Joshua 7:

> Israel hath sinned; yea, they have even transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; yea, they have even taken of the devoted thing . . . Therefore the children of Israel cannot stand before their enemies, because they are become accursed; I will not be with you anymore except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say: Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow; for thus saith the

---

[39] The Chroniclers could not countenance the attribution to Yahweh of a sinful impulse so they made Satan the mover of David in this instance (I Chron. 21:1).

> Lord, the God of Israel: There is a curse in the midst of thee, O Israel; thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you (7:11-13).

A natural corollary of this is the belief, taken up later in the Deuteronomic attitude but found also in the earliest literature of Israel, that when evil befell a person or a group, when prosperity was withdrawn or the group divided within itself by war or disaffection, that person or that group must have sinned against the holiness of Yahweh or of Yahweh's people.

When the widow of Zarephath lost her son (I Ki. 17:17ff) and Elijah visited her home soon afterward, she asked him if he had come to "bring my sin to remembrance and to slay my son?" She interpreted her son's death as punishment upon her for some sin and awaited in bitterness Elijah's disclosure of the nature of her sin.[40] When, on another occasion, Elijah appeared to Obadiah, the servant of Ahab, after three years of hiding in which he had been sought high and low, he commanded Obadiah to announce his reappearance to Ahab. Obadiah was sure that, by the time he returned with Ahab, Elijah would be gone again and he would suffer punishment for making a false announcement to Ahab.[41] Foreseeing this fate, he asked Elijah what sin he had committed that he should thus be delivered into Ahab's hands to be slain. He immediately

---

[40] J. Skinner, I & II Kings, (Century Bible; Edinburgh, T. & T. Jack, n.d.), p. 226.

[41] I Kings 18:7ff. Cf. Skinner, op. cit., p. 228.

associated expected punishment with past sin, even though it was unknown to him. When Joseph required his brothers to leave one of their number with him in Egypt while they returned to Canaan to take food and to get their youngest brother, Benjamin, they also foresaw clouds of punishment and said one to another, even within Joseph's hearing:

> We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us (Gen. 42:21).

When distress like that to which they had submitted their brother, even many years before, now fell on them they recognized their former actions as sinful, but apparently not until then.[42]

This association of suffering or distress with sinfulness has found lodgement in the language itself. We note it in this case where the brothers associate their own "distress" with the "distress" of their brother years before. We note it in other cases where the punishment for sin or iniquity is identified with the same word as that for sin or iniquity itself.

Cain, in his anger over the acceptance of his brother's offering and the rejection of his own, murdered his brother. The punishment is a curse involving his constant wandering because the earth will nowhere respond to his tilling of it. The imagination of Cain conjures

---

[42]It is true that Reuben protested that he had known it was sin at the time they committed it and had warned against it (Gen. 42:22), but the group had not so considered it until now.

up the picture of avengers pursuing him to slay him,[43] and his lament is that his "punishment" (עָוֹן = iniquity) is greater than he can bear (Gen. 4:13). That is, his own iniquity has consequences related to it; his sin must be borne by himself.

When Aaron and Miriam rebelled against the authority of Moses (Num. 12:1ff), they were sinning, according to the E.source. The punishment was laid only on Miriam, who became leprous at first, and then was cleansed but required to remain apart from the camp for seven days. Aaron's appeal to Moses is not that the punishment should be removed, but that their "sin" should not be laid upon them in that they had done what they had done foolishly, thus sinning (Num. 12:11). The consequence of their sin was that they were infected by the sin itself which broke out in leprosy in Miriam.

The weakness in the life of his holy people, manifested in some form of punishment, thus often seemed to be an invasion of the sin itself. It simply broke out in a material manifestation which was unclean or "unholy" and must be ridded from the group before the strength of the group returned. This material concept of sin and its punishment finds expression also in the idea of forgiveness entertained in the early sources. Forgiveness is not thought to do away with the sin or its punishment altogether. It must find its resting-place somewhere or

---

[43]Cf. Driver, Genesis, p. 66.

be "lifted up" indefinitely by Yahweh, himself.

Numbers 14:18ff says that Yahweh would pardon the sins of the Hebrews as Moses requested but, nonetheless, they would not see the promised land.

When David admitted his sin in his adultery with Bath-Sheba Nathan assured him that Yahweh:

> has also put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast greatly blasphemed the enemies of the Lord, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. (II Sam. 12:13-14).

When forgiveness is indicated by the verb נָשָׂא (literally, to lift up, or bear) it still implies that someone, perhaps the original sufferer of the sin or even God himself, is continuing to "bear" the sin which has been committed. Thus, in Gen. 50:17, the brothers of Joseph pleaded with Joseph to "bear" their sin, transgression and evil which they did to him, rather than to require them to bear it. When the Israelites, under Aaron's leadership, made a golden-calf-image (Exod. 32), Moses pleaded with Yahweh to "bear" their sin rather than cause them to bear it. It is implied that Yahweh did agree to bear the sin but that he reserved the right to visit it upon them at a future date (Exod. 32:34). When Saul slaughtered the Gibeonites in contravention of the covenant which had been made with them at an earlier time, a great famine came upon the whole people. The only way in which the famine could be halted was for seven members of Saul's family, upon whom the sin devolved,

to be slain.

There are numerous affinities between these aspects of the early concept of sin in Israel in relationship to the covenant with Yahweh and the ideas of sin reflected in other Near Eastern religions. Even the concept of a covenant relationship between gods and groups of men, itself, was not uncommon in the Near East.[44] But there is a significant difference in the nature of the covenant involved.

The gods of the Near East were nature-gods - personifications of one or more of the forces of nature. Men were thought to be intimately involved with the working of the natural forces. They were considered to have been born physically from the gods,[45] or to have made a blood-covenant which established such physical relationship. The cult of this sort of covenant sought to confirm, strengthen and renew this physical bond.[46] One of the major festivals at which this renewal or re-creation of the "covenant" between the god and his worshippers took place was that which was celebrated on the first day of each year. It sought to re-create the physical relationship or "covenant" between the people

---

[44]Cf. J.M.P. Smith, "The Chosen People", AJSL, XLV (1929), 73-82. His examples are not all of covenants but are of similar relationships. Cf. also Baab, op. cit., p. 136.

[45]Cf. J. E. Wright, "The Terminology of Old Testament Religion", JNES, I (1942), 408.

[46]. R. Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 319.

and their gods in order to ensure for the coming year the "blessing" which would flow from the gods into the people and all their ventures.[47]

If the ritual for the renewing of the relationship at the beginning of the year were properly performed, and if the "covenant" were maintained by the group so that the blessing of the god was continual and uninterrupted then the god was practically automatically obligated to protect his group and grant them a full measure of his material blessing. Indeed, the blood relationship which existed, either by physical generation or by the covenant sealed in blood, made the god and the people one for all time.[48] The relationship was physical and almost unconditional.

It is true that the covenant concept in Israel had much in common with the thought of the Near East in general. The cult of Israel, particularly, was strongly influenced, both in form to a great extent and in purpose to a lesser extent, by the cult of the Canaanites.[49] But the mainstream of covenant thought in Israel remained remarkably free from the basic assumptions of the cults of

---

[47] Kraeling, op. cit., p. 134, claims that a better name for this festival than that of "New Year's Festival" which has been attached to it would be "Re-creation" festival. For descriptions of the festival in Mesopotamia see the articles in S. H. Hooke, (ed), Myth and Ritual, (London, Oxford University Press, 1933).

[48] Cf. Baab, op. cit., p. 136; H. H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election, (London, Lutterworth Press, 1950), p. 47.

[49] Cf. E. J. Leslie, Old Testament Religion, (New York, Abingdon, 1936), pp. 158ff.

other Near Eastern religions.

The covenant in the Old Testament established a different sort of relationship between Israel and Yahweh. In the first place the covenant was not prior to the operation of the blessing of God upon the group. For God had already manifested that blessing in an act of history before the covenant was made. That act was the redemption of Israel[50] from her bondage in Egypt. The covenant was the response of Israel to that outpouring of God's blessing already given her. Such claim as God had upon Israel was the result of that act of grace rather than of a formal covenant. The covenant was the acceptance by the people of that offer and the assurance by God that his interest in her and his choice of her to fulfil his purposes would be continued. The covenant, then, did not establish the relationship; that was done by God. The covenant gave expression to the relationship and laid down a framework within which the relationship would be continued.

The preface to the earliest account of the covenant[51] shows that the writers recognized the primacy of

---

[50] That all the tribes of Israel were in Egypt is unlikely. But the later group, augmented by other tribes which had been in Canaan throughout the sojourn in Egypt, took the covenant and the tradition of redemption unto themselves.

[51] These verses are assigned usually to either J or E. Cf. S. R. Driver, Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, (Rev.; New York, Scribner's, 1910), p. 15; W.O.E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament, (London, S.P.C.K., 1934), p. 37; Pfeiffer, R.H., Introduction to the Old Testament,

God's act:

> Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore if ye will hearken unto my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own treasure from among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:4-6).

It is interesting to note, too, how the pre-exilic prophets base their claims, in the name of God, to the obedience of the people, not upon the covenant itself but upon this redemption of Israel from Egypt.[52]

The relationship of Israel to Yahweh, then, is a relationship of gracious adoption rather than natural, physical sonship. G. E. Wright has pointed out the significant distinction in terminology which differentiated Israel from the polytheistic religions of the Near East in this respect. In them, both the master-servant and the father-son motif were prevalent. In Israel the master-servant motif was almost solely adopted and united with the covenant idea, while the father-son motif was almost wholly rejected.[53] And where it is

---

(New York, Harpers, 1941), p. 151. But cf. W. H. Bennett, Exodus, (Century Bible; Edinburgh, T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), p. 137, and A. H. McNeile, The Book of Exodus, (Westminster Commentaries; London, Methuen, 1908), p. 110, who assign it to redactors.

[52] A. J. Phythian-Adams, The Call of Israel, (London, Oxford University Press, 1934), recognizes this throughout his book; Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 15, points out that it is just where we should expect the prophets to mention the covenant that this event is mentioned instead.

[53] Cf. Wright, "Terminology of Old Testament Religion", op. cit., pp. 407-414.

found in the Old Testament it is itself related to the covenant idea in a way which undercuts any idea of a primarily physical relationship.[54]

The physical covenants of the rest of the Near Eastern world had to be renewed regularly in order that the blessing of the gods on which the life of the group depended should continue to flow into the group. This renewal was accomplished by sacrificial acts accompanied by an elaborate mythology which was acted out ritually to induce the blessing of the gods. If this ritual cult were not properly performed the life blessing would be withheld; if it were properly performed the blessing was assured.

The Israelite covenant was made at a particular historical moment with a particular group of Israelites. It had to be re-affirmed by each successive generation, but it did not have to be renewed in the sense that the relationship itself had to be re-created from year to year.[55] We have seen that one of the conditions of the covenant which had to be maintained was the continual "holiness" of the possession of Yahweh. If this were not done, Yahweh's blessing would be withdrawn. But there was no <u>regular</u> renewing of this "holiness" as far as we know.

---

[54]Cf. Hosea 11:1ff; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; Jer. 3:19ff.; <u>et al.</u>

[55]Cf. Eichrodt, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 11; Rowley, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 35ff and 47ff. The latter points out the necessity of this re-affirmation with respect both to the covenant of the patriarchs and to that of Moses.

The main emphasis of the covenant of Israel was the requirement of obedience to the expressed will of Yahweh. Eichrodt remarks that the Israelite covenant is distinguished by this, that it "is accompanied by the Word as the expression of the will of God".

Although the historicity of the covenant of Moses is generally upheld by Biblical scholars,[56] the terms of the covenant, i.e. the "words" which revealed the will of God, are almost impossible of reconstruction.

---

[56] Cf. Baab, op. cit., p. 137: "Whatever the historian's attitude toward these matters as history, there is no better authenticated event in Israel's history than that centering in the making of the covenant, if the biblical testimony itself is considered."; Jastrow, Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, p. 235: " . . . the conception of Yahweh as an ethical power may be traced back to the Mosaic age."; H. W. Robinson, Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, p. 189: "The relation between Yahweh and Israel from the days of Sinai is at least virtually 'covenantal',"; Eichrodt, op. cit., I, 14: "the total conception of the form of the patriarchal period received its form from the interpretation of God stamped by the Mosaic origin of the covenant."; W. Baudissin, as reviewed by S. A. Cook in Journal of Theological Studies, 1921, p. 235: "We cannot understand Amos and the later prophets if they were the first to frame the ethical demands which they assert; we have first to postulate a Moses."; Budé, op. cit., p. 75: "The early documents assume the existence of a covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people."; Albright, op. cit., p. 196: "It is absurd to deny that Moses was actually the founder of the Israelite commonwealth and the framer of Israel's religious system."; Rowley, op. cit., p. 37: "Moses then led the people he had brought out of Egypt to the sacred mount, and there they pledged themselves in a covenant of loyalty to the God who had delivered them." (This is included in an outline which he refers to as a tracing of the "facts of history"; cf. also his footnotes to p. 46f.).

Yet Eichrodt, op. cit., I, 15, Davidson, HDB, I, 512, and others, have noted that the term "covenant" is strangely lacking (except twice in Hosea) from the eighth-century prophets.

That they included the elaborate system of laws of the Priestly Code, or the Deuteronomic Code, or even the Covenant Code is not now taken seriously by critical scholarship.

That the revealed "word" of God was expressed in the form of "ten words" is the witness of three of the four traditions of the covenant, but the choice of the ten words from the records is almost hopeless. Badé stated in 1913 that "belief in the Mosaic origin in any of the forms in which it (the Decalogue) has come down to us may be regarded as abandoned by most Old Testament scholars".[57] Nonetheless, W.O.E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson were more cautious in 1937 when they wrote: "Whether these commandments are the work of Moses or not, they do represent fairly generally the moral standard which we may ascribe to Israel in the days preceding the settlement".[58] W. F. Albright, in 1946, seemed to share that caution when, in commenting on the researches of Albrecht Alt on forms of law in the Near East, he wrote: "We cannot say how many of the apodictic laws[59] actually emanate directly from Moses, but the fact that they cannot be paralleled in this form outside of Israel and that they were believed by different schools of tradi-

---

[57] Badé, op. cit., p. 87, lists seventeen well-known critical scholars.

[58] Hebrew Religion, p. 108; though cf. p. 188.

[59] Albright, op. cit., p. 205. Cf. more fully concerning "apodictic laws" on p. 76 infra.

tional thought in Israel to go back to the time of Moses is sufficient indication that they are in accord with the movement which bears his name".[60]

There is some evidence to suggest that these commandments were pre-prophetic, if not Mosaic. Hosea, standing right near the beginning of the line of prophets in the literature of the Old Testament, already considers at least five of the acts prohibited by the "Ten Words" as sin (4:1-3):

> Yahweh hath a controversy with the inhabitants
> of the land,
> Because there is no truth, nor mercy (hesed),
> nor knowledge of God in the land.
> Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing,
> and committing adultery,
> They break all bounds; and blood toucheth blood".

"Knowledge of God", for Hosea, involves the prohibition of swearing, lying, murder, theft and adultery. Moreover, what is lacking in the land is truth and hesed as well as knowledge of God, both of which are frequently seen as essential elements of the upholding of the covenant.[61] The results of this sorry state of affairs is that "the land mourns and every one that dwelleth therein doth languish", the very weakness which results from failure

---

[60] Ibid.

[61] Pedersen, Israel, I, 342-3, shows that "truth" gains its meaning in terms of maintenance of the covenant. N. F. Lofthouse, "Ḥen and Ḥesed", Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, (Neue Folge Zehnter Band, 1933), pp. 35f, has likewise shown that "Ḥesed is not used indiscriminately, where any kind of favor is desired, but only where there is some recognized tie." Cf. also Smith, Distinctive Ideas, pp. 101ff.

to fulfil the covenant obligations.[62]

Pfeiffer would place the Decalogue as late as the Deuteronomists, though he admits that there is no chronological difficulty to considering it much earlier for "there never was a time in the history of Israel when murder, adultery, perjury, theft and the like were not considered offences of the first magnitude".[63]

This is certainly borne out in many passages of the earliest literature of Israel where such acts are considered not only "offences of the first magnitude" but are specifically called sins.

Cain is warned that sin lay at his door waiting to trap him, and his murder of his brother is undoubtedly that sin. Its punishment is indicated by the term "iniquity" which he thought was greater than he could bear (Gen. 4:7,13). David's sin in the matter of Bath-Sheba was at least partially his murder of Uriah (II Sam. 12:9f.). So also the men who slew Ish-Bosheth are condemned as "wicked men" and put to death (II Sam. 4:9-11). David's lament over Abner refers to him as a man who had fallen "before the children of iniquity" (II Sam. 3:34).

---

[62]Cf. Pedersen, Israel, I, 432-3, "It is from him [Yahweh] that the blessing radiates which upholds the healthy and the strong; he acts in the soul of the righteous with all his strength, and immediately withdraws from the unrighteous . . . . The sinner must fail because his soul is weak, and it is God who, because of the offence against him, puts weakness into it."

[63]Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 231.

As murder is considered sin so is stealing. As we have earlier noted, the sin of Jacob, alleged by Laban, must have been theft of animals left in his care while he was a shepherd for Laban, or theft of Laban's household gods when Jacob and his family fled.

Likewise, David's sin in the matter of Bath-Sheba was partially his murder of Urish. It was also partially his adultery with Bath-Sheba which constituted a violation of Uriah's property rights. The parable by which Nathan got David to condemn himself certainly points up this aspect of David's "sin" (II Sam. 12:1-6).

When the brothers of Joseph were discovered by the Egyptian officers with Joseph's golden goblet in Benjamin's sack, they admitted at once:

> God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold we are my lord's bondmen, both we and he also in whose hand the cup is found.(Gen. 44:11ff).

When Jephthah found himself in difficulty with the Ammonites they declared their grievance to be the infringement of their territory by the Israelites when they marched north from Egypt to Canaan. Jephthah gave an elaborate defence of Israel declaring that she had taken nothing that was not her right.[64] "Therefore I have not sinned against thee" is his conclusion to the matter (Judg. 11:27).[65]

---

[64]Israel's "right" here is based on the gift of the land by Yahweh, not on any agreement with Ammon. There is implied a contrast between the power of Yahweh and that of Chemosh as the definition of "right".

[65]Staples, op. cit., pp. 69ff., regards most of

In a similar manner there is a frequent denunciation of unnatural sexual relations as sin in these early sources. It is not always possible to determine whether adultery is denounced because of the sexual perversion involved or because of the violation of the property rights of the husband or master, but there does seem to breathe through the various accounts a horror of the acts in themselves. In either case it constituted a sin in Israel.

A story which is twice told in J and once in E is that of the passing off of their wives as their sisters by Abraham and Isaac in order to save their own lives (Gen. 12:10ff; 20:6ff; 26:1ff). The critical point in each story is that at which it appears probable that the ruler of the foreign land or some of his men may take the wife in question as a wife for themselves. God guarded carefully that the act of adultery should not actually be consummated. Genesis 20:6ff refers to the possible act as a "sin". God, in a dream appeared to Abimelech and warned him against sinning against God by entering into this relationship with Sarah, and Abimelech, in turn, upbraided Abraham for placing him in a precarious position where, in his ignorance, he might have sinned against Abraham. Likewise, Gen. 26:1ff reports Abimelech as saying to Isaac: "and thou wouldest have brought

---

these passages as evidence that sin is simply inferiority.

guiltiness (אָשַׁם) upon us".[66]

The story of Joseph's resistance to temptation in the matter of his master's wife also reveals the side of sin which is the violation of his master's rights and the side of it which is the act of adultery itself.

> Behold, my master having me, knoweth not what is in the house and he hath put all that he hath into my hand. He is not greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? (Gen. 30:7ff).

The wickedness seems to be the breach of his master's trust and the taking of his property for himself; the sin against God is perhaps the unnatural perversion of the sexual relationship.

Another series of passages in which the J writers deal with the wickedness, sin and iniquity of this unnatural perversion of sex is that series dealing with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. All these passages (Gen. 13:13; 18:20; 19:15) relate to adultery and to the perversion named after the city of Sodom, Sodomy. So despicable are the cities' sins in these respects that sensible Israelites tried to avoid them and their destruction was eventually ordered even though Abraham

---

[66] Staples, op. cit., states that these stories are used to show that God directs even sins to the fulfilment of his will. On this cf. A. B. Davidson, Ezekiel, (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge, University Press, 1906), p. xxxvi. Even if Staples' contention be true, these stories still reveal a horror of the act which might have taken place.

elicited from God the promise that they would not be destroyed if ten good men could be found in them (Gen. 18:32).

It is with respect to such acts that we find the phrases declaring that "such things ought not to be done in Israel" (Cf. Gen. 34:7; II Sam. 13:12; Judg. 19:30). It has frequently been noted that this phrase links the ethics of Israel in this period only with popular morality and not with the will of the covenant God.[57]

It is entirely probable, however, that these do reveal an aspect of the covenant relationship. We have noted that, by her covenant with Yahweh, Israel has become his "holy" people, supported by his "spirit" and strengthened through his blessing. The customs, then, of this people, or at least those customs which make for a strong people, are defended by Yahweh, and those practices which weaken his people become offences against Yahweh's own holiness; that is, they are sin.

A number of these customs which were so ingrained in their experience at the time of the covenant-making as to be considered necessary to their survival may have been included in the original covenant itself. Albrecht Alt has pointed out that, although there is a whole corpus of law which the Old Testament shares with Babylonian, Hittite and Assyrian codes (and we could now

---

[57]Cf. H. W. Robinson, Christian Doctrine of Man, pp. 47-49. He gives this as one of the limitations of the early concept of sin.

add Nuzian codes as well), there is a type of law which is unique to the Old Testament. The former, commonly known in most Near Eastern countries, he calls casuistic law.[68] It is cast in the "if-style", is in the third person, and deals with civil matters almost exclusively. The latter type, found only in the Old Testament, he calls apodictic law. It is usually very curt, somewhat poetic in style and thus easily remembered, regularly in the second person rather than in the third, and presupposes religious background in every case if it is not purely religious in nature. It is very direct and has no "if" to it. It expresses absolute certainty. It is illustrated in the Decalogue, in the curses of Deuteronomy 27, in Leviticus 18:7ff, and in other scattered laws, most of which provide the death penalty for violation. For this type of law there is no real Near Eastern parallel.[69] It is always indicated as the direct command of God. Such laws may have been considered a part of Israel's covenant responsibility from the very first.

But even casuistic laws in the Old Testament, having close linguistic and legal relationships to similar laws in other Near Eastern lands, frequently transform

---

[68] A. Alt, Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts, (Leipzig, S. Hirzel, 1934), pp. 15ff.

[69] G. E. Wright, "How Did Early Israel Differ From Her Neighbors?", Biblical Archaeologist, VI (Feb. 1943), 17f.

themselves under the influence of the covenant into commands of God.[70] These were laws which became the customs of the people from time to time and were considered as part of the covenant responsibility of the people because violation of them weakened and harmed the covenanted people and lessened its holiness.

However, far more important than the specific terms (which were subject to addition and interpretation in the changing conditions of Israel's life anyway) is the basic idea in the covenant records that Yahweh is a God who has revealed his will in words and who continues to speak to his people. "The main thesis of the Old Testament [is] that the nature and particularly the will of God is sufficiently known to enable men to act responsibly".[71] "Priests and prophets may differ on the specific content of God's requirements, but for both it is fundamental that he has showed man what is good".[72]

There is witness in every writer of the Old Testament that Yahweh was a "speaking" God.[73] Deuteronomy

---

[70] Cf. Meek, Hebrew Origins, pp. 78f. for examples.

[71] Baab, op. cit., p. 138.

[72] M. Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1946), p. 12.

[73] Cf. R. Bowman, "Yahweh the Speaker", JBES, III (Jan. 1944), 1-8. In this article Bowman has pointed to a new possibility for the etymological meaning of YHWH. He derives it from the root hāwāh, which he relates to the Ugaritic word hwt, whose identification with Akkadian awat or awatu, he says, is now pretty generally accepted.

refers to the revelation of Yahweh as only in a voice: "Ye heard the voice of words, but ye saw no form; only a voice". (4:12).

In the traditions regarding Moses it is as a spokesman of Yahweh that he appears. At first he protested that he was not a good speaker and therefore could not be Yahweh's agent in Egypt. Yahweh then appointed Aaron as Moses' spokesman:

> And thou shalt speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass that he shall be to thee a mouth and thou shalt be to him a god. (Exod. 4:15-16).

Here, clearly, Moses the prophet is considered the "mouthpiece" of a God who speaks. This position is vindicated in the episode of the rebellion of Aaron and Miriam against the right of Moses to speak alone for Yahweh:

> If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, do make myself known unto him in a vision, I do speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is trusted in all my house; with him do I speak mouth to mouth . . . (Num. 12:6-8).

He supports his own conclusion by reference to an article by A. Guillaume which shows that every one of the occurrences of the Hebrew root hwh is connected with organs of speech or with a verb which signifies utterance. From such evidence Bowman concludes that YHWH must mean "He declares" or "He speaks" or "He commands". Albright, op. cit., pp. 145f., discusses the Sumerian word enem, which he relates to Akkadian awatu, as the means of revelation of the God En-lil, and states that this usage is an important source of the New Testament concept of logos. For other conclusions on the meaning of YHWH cf. J. Obermann, "The Divine Name YHWH in the Light of Recent Discoveries", JBL, LXVIII (1949), 301-324. Neither Albright nor Obermann seems to take any note of Bowman's article.

Moses' supreme place in Israel is the result of his special, intimate, speaking relationship with Yahweh.[74]

As an emphasis is placed upon the revealed word of Yahweh in the covenant, so is an emphasis laid upon the necessity of obedience to that word as a basis for a strong and peaceful life for his people. Nathan's rebuke of David shows this point of view:

> Thus saith the Lord: I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house . . . and if that were too little, then would I add unto thee so much more. Wherefore hast thou despised the word of the Lord to do that which is evil in my sight? . . . Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house . . . (II Sam. 12:7-10).

As long as David had been obedient to Yahweh's word, he had been blessed with strength, prosperity, peace, and "so much more". But with disobedience came a lessening or withdrawing of the support of Yahweh and the result was to be discord in David's life instead of peace. From a later source, Samuel's rebuke of Saul (I Sam. 15:24) is evidence of the same reasoning.

Now let us sum up what we have seen as to the nature of the covenant. It involved basically the belief that Yahweh was utterly and uniquely "holy" and that his choice of Israel in Egypt and her acceptance of that choice through the covenant made her his "holy" people. As long as she remained his "holy" people He would support her with his spirit; when she sinned

---

[74]Cf. also Exodus 33:7-11.

against him she lost His support and the strength and prosperity which resulted from it; indeed He might actively weaken her by sending a curse or an evil spirit into her midst.

In order to maintain her "holiness" Israel must first of all always recognize and respect what belonged uniquely to Yahweh within the covenant relationship and must never trespass against it. This category included His own immediate presence, His ark and other sacred objects, cities or spoils of war devoted to him, oaths or curses or blessings spoken in His name, persons designated by Him for special tasks of leadership. All these partook of Yahweh's own holiness and were defended by Him against appropriation or use by anyone else in any way not in keeping with their purpose.

Moreover, Israel herself came within this category as a "holy people". Yahweh upheld the whole people against violation of its holiness and upheld the particular status of each person within the totality. Thus any act which divided the people or denied the rightful status of any person within the group was a trespass against the holiness of Yahweh himself.

Sin was any transgression, wilful or not, upon the area in which Yahweh's power was at work upholding His covenant. This would seem to equate sin in Israel, in this early period at any rate, with the concept of sin in other Near Eastern religions. But there is this

significant difference which we have noted. Yahweh had revealed in his covenant what his will was, i.e. how they might fulfil <u>their</u> obligations to the covenant. Moreover he continued to reveal his will in the "words" which he spoke through chosen leaders, and in "words" which he <u>did</u> to uphold or to chasten his holy people when they heard him or refused to hear him.[75] Israel's consciousness of sin was, therefore, not lost "in the darkness of the destruction of the relationship to an unknown god".[76] One might still object that the revelation of Yahweh's "word" was at times rather arbitrary and perhaps capricious. Yet the Hebrew believed that since Yahweh had chosen them as his holy people and would defend their status his commands would all be in the best interests of that people.[77]

This is the presupposition behind the reading back of the covenant relationship through Jacob and Isaac to Abraham. In understanding the accounts of the covenants in the patriarchal period we must

> take into account the history-forming effect of the covenant thought, whose inner dynamic placed the traditions of the earlier period,

---

[75]The Hebrew word דָּבָר is used for "event" as well as for utterance, but in most such occurrences it refers to events which had been spoken of earlier and had then come to pass. The same root, though probably from a different non-Hebrew root, is used for "pestilence".

[76]Hempel, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 185.

[77]Cf. Burrows, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 13-14.

> unorganized and mixed with foreign elements, under the eschatological idea of divine election and comprehended it as a systematic series of events, in order to grasp the folk-history in its totality as the work of Yahweh.[78]

It is also the presupposition beneath the accounts of creation and of the primeval stories of the alienation of man from God through rebellion. For in Israel's thought of man, he was made to live in harmony with God and the world God had created for him. The covenant(s) laid down the range within which such harmonious life could be lived and if the covenant(s) was upheld man could count on the support of God in all his undertakings. If the covenant was not upheld man would find no support and would weaken and sicken and, perhaps, be destroyed.[79] It is a significant fact that, in the early sources of the Old Testament, "righteousness",[80] which later takes on ethical meanings, has for the most part only the meaning of upholding the covenant. Yahweh defends the covenant by his power, his "righteous acts" (cf. Judg. 5:11; I Sam. 12:7); Israel, or individuals within the nation, defend the covenant with Yahweh or covenants with each other by fulfilling the obligations

---

[78] Eichrodt, op. cit., I, 14-15.

[79] Cf. E. A. Irwin, "Hebrew Religion" in Frankfort et al., Intellectual Adventure, p. 262; Maab, op. cit., p. 47; Otto A. Piper, "The Biblical Understanding of Man", Theology Today, I (July 1944), 188-203.

[80] Hebrew צֶדֶק and צְדָקָה. Cf. Snaith, op. cit., pp. 72-78.

of them, i.e. by being "righteous". (cf. Gen. 18; 38:36; Exod. 23:7-8; I Sam. 24:17; et al.)

The words of Yahweh were not given in any hostile mood, nor in any purely capricious display of power, but for the purpose of supporting and strengthening his holy people.

> And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is this day. And it shall be righteousness (צְדָקָה) unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before the Lord our God. (Deut. 6:24-25).

There is a further question with respect to the covenant and its relationship to the concept of sin in the Old Testament. That is the part which the sacrificial cult played in upholding the covenant or in relation to the sins of the people. This is not easy to determine for the period prior to the entrance of the Israelites into Palestine. That the agricultural festivals and most of the sacrifices of the Canaanites were taken over and observed by the Israelites after their entry into the land seems clear enough.[81] But it is generally conceded that these were not earlier in Israelite life than the period of the settlement.

The references in the Old Testament to sacrifice prior to the Sinaitic covenant are, for the most part,

---

[81] J and D give the laws of these festivals as laws to be observed after the entry into Canaan; E gives them as laws to be observed forthwith; all three sources date from periods well after the entry.

quite indeterminate as to the nature or purpose of such sacrifices. They included offerings of first-born animals and first-fruits of the fields (Gen. 4:3-4), burnt-offerings (Gen. 8:20, 22:13; Exod. 10:25; 18:12), sacrifices which involved communion meals (Gen. 31:46, 54,[82] Exod. 11:1ff, 18:12), as well as sacrifices not described as anything more than simply "sacrifices" (Gen. 46:1).[83]

In both the J and the E accounts of the making of the covenant at Mount Sinai sacrifices seem to play their part. The J account is extremely brief and not altogether clear. The E account is quite explicit:

> And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins; and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said: All that the Lord hath spoken will we do and obey. And Moses took of the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said: Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you in agreement with all these words.(Exod. 24: 4-8).

There are two significant features of this account. First, though the sprinkling of blood on altar and people

---

[82]It is not clear whether both Laban's group and Jacob's group joined in the meal or whether just Jacob's did. Cf. Driver, Genesis, p. 289.

[83]Many references to "altars" presuppose sacrifices. Cf. Gen. 12:7-8; 13:18; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1-8.

links this ritual with the general primitive ritual of blood-covenants, yet it is expressly stated that the covenant is made in agreement with "all these words", a feature which distinguishes it from these others. Secondly, peace-offerings are made along with burnt-offerings. These are almost peculiarly covenant sacrifices and involve a communion meal.[84] It is sometimes considered to have been derived from the meaning of "shālēm", "to make whole", and sometimes from the pi'el form meaning to "pay back". But

> whether the idea is that of complete, that is peaceful, relations with God, or whether it is that of a payment to the same end, the final result is the same - peace with God.[85]

Oesterley notes that Jack considers the same sacrifice to have the meaning "sacrifice for friendship" when used in the Ras Shamra texts.[86]

The J account, following immediately upon the E account in Exodus 24, seems to involve a communion meal of a kind. It was partaken by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel, apparently in the presence of God.

These "peace-offerings" and communion meals are found frequently in the early sources of the Old Testa-

---

[84]Cf. Pedersen, Israel, II, 333-335.

[85]Cf. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel, p. 87.

[86]Ibid., pp. 87-88.

ment and very often on occasions where covenants are made. We have already noted it in the case of Laban and Jacob (Gen. 31:46-54) and in the Sinai covenant above. In Exodus 34 the J writer warns Israel against making covenants with the Canaanites lest:

> they go astray unto their gods, and they call thee, and thou eat of their sacrifice.(34:15b).

When Aaron led the people into the worship of the calf-image, the people

> offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings and . . . sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to make merry. (Exod. 32:6).

In the re-affirmation of the covenant commanded in Deuteronomy 27:7 and carried out in Joshua 8:31 it is a peace-offering which is given, attended by a communion meal. When the tribes gathered together to join in battle against the Benjamites because of their crime against the Levite they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings (Judg. 20:26; 21:4). When David brought the ark up to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:17-18), when Saul was made king by the people after his victory over the Ammonites (I Sam. 11:15), when Solomon had dreamed a dream in which Yahweh had promised him all that he had asked, and more, (I Ki. 3:15), and when the Temple was dedicated (I Ki. 8: 63-64), there were offered on every occasion peace-offerings sometimes accompanied by burnt-offerings. Each occasion was a sort of re-affirmation of the covenant between Yahweh and his people or between members of his

covenanted group, and an affirmation of the peace between them was appropriate.

In this positive sense of affirming and re-affirming the covenant relationships sacrifice, therefore, did play a real part, though not, as far as the evidence would show, in any regularly repeated form. There is some question whether sacrifice played a part in expiating sins against the covenant relationship. There are only three or four passages which offer any evidence.

When Noah made his sacrifice of burnt-offering to Yahweh in gratitude for having been delivered from the flood Yahweh smelled the sweet odor and said: "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake". (Gen. 8:21). The result, though not the reason, of the sacrifice was the appeasement of a hostile God. There is no question, however, of expiation of any sin.

When David was at a loss to understand why Saul should pursue him so relentlessly he assumed that Saul had been stirred up by Yahweh or by malicious men. His solution was: "If it be Yahweh, let him accept an offering".(I Sam. 26:19).

Likewise when David had been moved to take a census of Israel and this had then been revealed to him to be a sin, the people were punished by a plague. To stay the plague David purchased the threshing-floor of Araunah and sacrifices to offer upon it and "Yahweh was entreated for the land and the plague was stayed from

Israel". (II Sam. 24:25).[87] In both cases an angry God was appeased but also in both cases the sin had already done its damage and does not seem to be thought to be expiated.

There is only one clear reference to sacrifice as expiation in the early sources. That is in I Sam. 3:14 where, after the wickedness of Eli's sons is described, Yahweh swears:

> that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated (Hithpa'el of כפר) with sacrifice (זבח) nor with offerings (מנחה) forever.

On the other hand it is true, as Pedersen states, that in the idea of sacrifice, either as a gift to God to strengthen the bond of union, or as a communion meal in which God and people shared,

> in all cases a new peace was created for him through the sacrifice, a renewal of harmony. Man could only be in harmony with the God when he was "whole". The sacrifice removed whatever was wasting away his integrity, what was called sin. This was brought about by man being sanctified, while at the same time God was induced to be lenient towards him.[88]

But it was the positive side of sacrifice which was in the forefront in the early cult. The emphasis was on gratitude for the continuous manifestations of Yahweh's goodness to his holy people in supporting and prospering them.

---

[87]Though 24:16 states that Yahweh had already repented and stayed the destruction.

[88]Pedersen, Israel, II, 359.

> Sacrifice was more often eucharistic than propitiatory, and it was more often offered with feelings of joy and security than in fear or contrition.[89]

When the Israelites settled down in Canaan they were confronted with a much more complex sort of life than they had heretofore encountered. In nomadic life there had been burnt-offerings which were in the nature of gifts to Yahweh, and there had been peace-offerings which were in the nature of communion meals, part being given to Yahweh and part consumed in a meal by the people. In addition there was the sacrifice of the first-born of the flocks. Since all the flocks belonged to Yahweh and could not be appropriated without encroachment on his property and punishment for it, the first-born animals, representing the whole birth-group, were given to Him in order that the rest could be safely appropriated.[90]

In Canaan this same principle was applied to first-fruits of the land and eventually, by translation into the "tithe", to everything that came into a person's possession during any given period of time. Moreover, other kinds of sacrifice such as oblations of wine, incense-burning, offerings of cakes, and so on, were added to the few which had been known earlier. Also the occasions for sacrifice were multiplied. The Canaanite agricultural economy was regulated by the

---

[89]G. B. Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 95.

[90]Pedersen, Israel, II, 305-317.

seasons of the year and regular festivals and frequent special days were observed instead of the occasional sacrifices of the earlier period.

Much of this Canaanite cult could be taken over and adapted by the Hebrews to their own concepts of the maintenance of their covenant with Yahweh. Since they were his people, their agricultural life belonged to him just as their nomadic life had done. But the basic idea of the Canaanite cult - that the correct operation of sacrifices and ritual would inevitably obligate the gods to do man's will - could not be adapted to the Yahweh covenant. When the people attempted it, as they seem to have done in the politically insecure period of the latter part of the eighth and seventh centuries,[91] they ran into the opposition of the prophets, many of whom deprecated the multiplicity of sacrifices and the feverish ritual activity.[92] Amos and Jeremiah both questioned whether the sacrificial cult was a required part of the responsibility of Israel to the covenant at all.[93]

Certainly the evidence of the early sources is

---

[91] Ibid., pp. 338ff.

[92] Cf. Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-24; Hosea 6:6; Isa. 1:12f.; Jer. 7:22; Mic. 6:6-8.

[93] Amos 5:21-24 and Jer. 7:22. In both passages the question is regarding "burnt-offerings and sacrifices" and Amos says that Yahweh will not accept their "peace offerings". They do not confine their denunciation to the distinctively Canaanite sacrifices.

that the Mosaic covenant did not involve an elaborate sacrificial cult, that this cult was not primarily for the expiation of sin, and that the later elaboration of the sacrificial cult under the influence of Canaanism was not an aid to the fulfilment, by the Israelites, of their responsibilities to Yahweh.

CHAPTER IV

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRE-EXILIC PROPHETS

We have now seen that there lay at the foundation of Israelite religious life, from the time of the Exodus onward, a covenant which recognized the holiness of Yahweh alone and His possession of Israel as a people. This made Israel also holy and offered to her Yahweh's supporting strength as long as she fulfilled her obligations within the covenant. However, the people in general did not always understand the claims of this covenant relationship, and even official circles tended to compromise it to meet the pressures placed upon it by the new life into which the Israelites entered when they invaded Palestine.

These pressures were of two kinds. The first was the pressure of Canaanite religious concepts. These were so closely related to the agricultural mode of life on which the livelihood of Israel henceforth depended that the Israelites took over many aspects of it with the new mode of life itself. Thus they began to celebrate the three annual harvest festivals - of Unleavened Bread, of Harvest, and of Ingathering.[1] These eventually

---

[1]Cf. R.B.Y. Scott, Relevance of the Prophets,

found a permanent place in the religious life of Israel though they were soon invested with historical significance in addition to their agricultural meaning. As long as the various practices of Canaan which Israel adopted with the agricultural way of life were actually features of that mode of life and did not seem to contradict the covenant of Israel with Yahweh, there was little challenge to them. But the evidence of many of the later prophetic utterances is that the people did begin to adopt some of the basic assumptions of the Canaanite cult, particularly the "covenant" idea of a physical relationship of god and people, practices such as sacred prostitution, and even the idea that the Baal gods were the natural owners of the land and the givers of its fertility. This was a challenge to the sole possession of Israel by Yahweh and it undermined the distinctive basis of the Israelite covenant.

The second kind of pressure on the covenant idea was economic. As soon as the Israelites settled permanently enough to establish title to particular plots of land, to build permanent homes, to accumulate possessions against future need, and to enter into the barter economy of their Canaanite neighbors, the strong sense of kinship and group solidarity and responsibility,

---

pp. 26-27; also E. A. Leslie, Old Testament Religion, pp. 40ff., 134; also R. Dussaud, Les Origines Cananeenes du Sacrifice Israelite, (Paris, E. Leroux, 1921), pp. 150ff.

which had existed in Mosaic times and through the wilderness wandering, began to break down. This whole process was accelerated by the establishment by David of a military and administrative capital at Jerusalem, and by the addition by Solomon of the magnificent court and temple which he built. Heavy taxes and confiscation of goods and labor became necessary to support these undertakings. As those with poor crops could not meet their taxes, they had to borrow from those who had more than enough. Interest was charged at high rates. Debtors had to sell themselves into slavery to redeem their honor. Extremes of wealth and poverty, of power and weakness, of mastery and slavery, were made greater. The "holiness" of the covenant people was in danger from such inequalities and oppressions.

It was not the differences of station in the group that became deplorable. Such differences had always been recognized. The tribal patriarch had possessed recognized power, the eldest son had had recognized rights, and so on. Each person had his position within the group. It is doubtful if the covenant relationship made any difference to that. When David was appointed king over Israel (II Sam. 5:3) he entered into a covenant with the people which must have accorded him certain prerogatives. This "right" within the total group was called his "mishpat". When the people wanted a king Samuel had warned them what would

be the "mishpat" of a king within the covenant group (I Sam. 8:9). The priests had their "mishpat" entitling them to a share of the meat of sacrifices (I Sam. 2:13; Deut. 18:3). The eldest son had his "mishpat" (Deut. 21:17). Specific covenants were made to establish these various "mishpatim". The Mosaic covenant was supposed to maintain the "mishpat" of every Israelite within the covenant.

But the "mishpat" of every person in the covenant group was not only privilege; it was responsibility, too; if he presumed too much he had gone beyond his "mishpat". Thus, David admitted he had sinned when Nathan pointed out to him that he had acted in a manner which was not right for a rich man to exercise over a poor man (II Sam. 12:6,13). He had broken the covenant position which had been given him by the Lord. Thus, also, Elijah denounced Ahab for consenting to have Naboth killed that he might take possession of his vineyard;

> I have found thee; because thou hast given thyself over to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord. (I Ki. 21:20).

Ahab was king but his position within the covenant did not give him any right to violate the "mishpat" of Naboth, which was to retain and cherish "the inheritance of his fathers". When Jezebel chided Ahab with the question as to whether he was the ruler of Israel (21:7) she was showing her lack of understanding of, or her contempt for, the Israelite concept of the kingship

which was exercised always within the idea of the covenant with Yahweh.[2]

The period of Omri and Ahab was a particularly prosperous period of Israel's history. It was followed by a period of some uncertainty in foreign relationships. But within two or three generations there was another period of great commercial prosperity and expansion under Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah. It was this period which saw the activity of the first four great writing prophets of the Old Testament: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah.

Amos was a native of Judah but prophesied in the northern kingdom where the influence of Canaanite culture was strong. The people believed that their prosperity had been sent by Yahweh (or even by Baal) and that he would continue to send it as long as they heaped the sanctuaries with gifts. This belief made them insensitive to any approaching dangers.[3] Amos counteracted the idea of some that it was Baal who gave the fine harvests,[4]

---

[2]Cf. Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, (New York, Scribner's, 1950), pp. 379f.

[3]Tiglath-Pileser had begun to move restlessly in Assyria and Amos may well have foreseen difficulties for the western states.

[4]Cf. also Hosea 2:7-17 where he likewise claims that Yahweh has been responsible for the things Israel considered to have come from Baal and from her worship of Baal.

by declaring that it is Yahweh who is the controller of the abundance of crops, the giver of rain and sunshine, the sender of pests and plagues (4:6-10). But this is not the distinctive area of Yahweh's revelation. Though Amos makes no direct reference to the covenant at Sinai, he shows Yahweh to be one who has made his will known directly to his people, who has spoken to them and expects obedience:

> Yahweh roareth from Zion,
> And uttereth his voice from Jerusalem.(1:2).
>
> The lion hath roared, who will not fear?
> The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy? (3:8).

Almost every chapter begins with a declaration that Yahweh has revealed or is revealing his word to Israel. He declares that Yahweh has punished the people in natural ways (4:6-12) and in historical events (6:7-14; 8:8-9), but the final punishment will be the withdrawing of his word from the people:

> . . . I will send a famine in the land
> Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
> But of hearing the words of the Lord.
> And they shall wander from sea to sea,
> And from the north even to the east;
> They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord,
> And shall not find it.(8:11-12).

The primacy of the revealed word of Yahweh undergirds everything Amos has to say about sin.

In the first two chapters Amos assumes that the nations other than Israel have at least an elementary knowledge of the will of Yahweh. Their sins, for which

they will be duly punished, are their rebellions[5] against Yahweh in terms of the ordinary humane requirements which any nation recognized as the "foundation of ordered society".[6] But they are not considered simply as indecencies,[7] for they are each time termed "rebellion", a word which is almost regularly paralleled to "sin" and "iniquity".

However, there is no doubt that Amos considered that Yahweh had revealed himself especially to Israel and for that very reason would hold her all the more accountable for her sins. This is stated explicitly in 3:2. But it is certainly implied also in the greater length in which Amos deals with the "rebellions" of Israel in 2:6-12. The first thing, then, that Amos says about sin is that it constitutes rebellion against the known word of Yahweh.

The second thing he says is that the revealed will of Yahweh shows him desiring good and not evil, righteousness and justice and not oppression and perversion of justice.

> I know how manifold are your transgressions
> [rebellions],
> And how mighty are your sins;
> Ye that afflict the just, that take a ransom,
> And that turn aside the needy in the gate.(5:12).

---

[5] פֶּשַׁע , if translated "transgression" implies the breaking of a moral code; "rebellion" retains the personal relationship.

[6] Smaith, Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, p.62.

[7] It seems to me that Pfeiffer says no more than this. Cf. his Introduction to the Old Testament, pp.581-3.

Here sin is defined in terms of injustice toward those who are not able to defend themselves, and if any further evidence of this definition were needed, Amos' indictment of Israel in 2:6-8 and 8:4-7 would provide it.

He seems to denounce the people because they have divorced ordinary justice and righteousness from religion altogether. They do not establish any connection between the word of Yahweh and their business and political life. Indeed, they carry the visible evidence of their injustice and unrighteousness right into the sanctuaries where they claim to be fulfilling the requirements of their god (cf. 5:4). Duhm[8] says that Amos had no conception of sin, that he simply expected that the life of man would issue in good and that what he condemned was that it does not issue in good. But this is precisely what his doctrine of sin was. When the nation maintains the unity and holiness of its life by upholding the "mishpat" of its members good does issue, because Yahweh then sends strength and prosperity into their midst. When they destroy this holiness by exploitation and oppression they may expect Yahweh's active destruction of their strength and power. He will send gloom and darkness rather than the expected light and they will flee from trouble to worse trouble (5:18-20).

---

[8] Theologie des alten Testaments, pp. 120ff., quoted in W. R. Harper, Amos and Hosea, (ICC; New York, Scribner's, 1905), p. cxviii.

The third thing that Amos has to say about sin is that an exaggerated sacrificial cult will not make up deficiencies in the national character.[9] Seeking the foreign way does not uphold the distinctively Israelite holiness.

> Seek ye me and live;
> But seek not Bethel,
> Nor enter into Gilgal,
> And pass not to Beersheba;
> For Gilgal shall go into captivity,
> And Bethel shall come to nought.
> Seek the Lord and live
> Lest he break out like fire . . . (5:5-6)
>
> I hate, I despise your feasts,
> And I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
> Yea, though ye offer me burnt-offerings and meal-offerings,
> I will not accept them;
> . . . . . .
> But let justice well up as waters,
> And righteousness as a mighty stream. (5:21-24).

Israel maintained her holiness for forty years in the wilderness without all these sacrifices, he points out (5:25).

There is a fourth thing which Amos says about sin. It is that it has not completely separated Israel from Yahweh's covenant love. Yahweh's punishment has been for the very purpose of exciting Israel to return to the path Yahweh has willed for them, to return to

---

[9] Amos 4:4ff. suggests that the prophet is concerned with an attempt to gain Yahweh's favor by piling up far more sacrifices and offerings than are required. I Sam. 1:7, 21 seems to refer to yearly sacrifices, this text to daily ones; Deut. 14:28 requires tithes every three years, this text after three days.

Yahweh himself. Amos says that Yahweh has sent famine, drought, mildew and blight, plague and destruction of cities (4:6-11), all in order to get Israel to return. He declares that it is because Yahweh has known Israel in a peculiar way amidst all the peoples of the earth that he will continue to punish their iniquities (3:2).[10] "Seek the Lord and live"; "Seek good and not evil, that ye may live" (5:6; 5:14). This is Yahweh's desire for his people.

But Amos knows his people too well and therefore there is little relief to his prophecy of doom upon the nation. Yahweh's eyes are upon all the nations; it is upon the sinful nation "and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth" (9:8).[11] There is only one small "perhaps" which is almost lost in the general picture of doom, but which may be very significant in the light of Isaiah's later idea of the righteous remnant.

> Hate the evil, and love the good,
> And establish justice in the gate;
> It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,
> Will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.(5:15).

Amos is not at all sure that any will be saved from the general destruction which he sees as punishment for the

---

[10] Cf. Rowley, Biblical Doctrine of Election, p. 55.

[11] The addition, "saving that I will not utterly destroy . . ." is almost universally considered a later, more optimistic ending. It seems to me that 9:10 is not in the spirit of the addition, though it would add an individualism to Amos which is not considered to have emerged until Jeremiah.

general sin, but he does know that only those who have sought good and established justice, i.e. who have been true Israelites according to the covenant, will be among any remnant which may be saved.

Hosea seems to have been a native of Israel, so far as we are able to tell.[12] Nonetheless he denounced his own northern kingdom with as little mercy as did Amos. He uses the basic terms "sin", "iniquity", "wickedness" and "rebellion" quite freely. For the most part, however, there is little content given to them; they stand alone in the text:

> The more they were increased, the more they
> sinned against me,
> I will change their glory into shame,
> They feed on the sin of my people,
> And set their heart on their iniquity.(4:7-8).

This tells us little more than that there was sin and iniquity among the people and that the leaders did not discourage it, presumably because it gave them lucrative practice.[13] Many other passages are equally as vague as

---

[12]The evidence is very slim. Reference to Israel simply as "the land" (4:1,3) and to the king as "our king" (7:5) are usually adduced. Apart from these, only the supposed intimate knowledge of the north and warmth of religion, presumably more characteristic of the north, are given as evidence. Cf. T. K. Cheyne, The Book of Hosea, (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge, University Press, 1905), p. 10. However, there is no indication to the contrary.

[13]Some have wondered if "feed on the sin of my people" was an early reference to the sin-offering, part of which was eaten by the priests. Cf. Gray, op. cit., p.61, note 1.

far as any content of sin goes.[14]

However, there are some passages in which the content of the sins denounced seem clear enough. They would seem to be of three categories: the sinfulness of economic and social corruption and injustice; the sinfulness of political trust in corrupt kings and in foreign alliances; the sinfulness of impurity of worship and particularly of idolatry.

Like Amos, Hosea saw much injustice and unfairness in the social and economic practices of the day:

> Swearing and lying, killing, and stealing and committing adultery!
> They break all bounds, and blood toucheth blood.(4:2).

> As for the trafficker, the balances of deceit are in his hand,
> He loveth to oppress.
> And Ephraim said: "Surely I am become rich,
> I have found me wealth". (12:8-9).

But, compared to the other three eighth century prophets, he makes surprisingly little reference to this aspect of sin.

There are more references to the sin of trusting in corrupt kings in the local scene and in political alliances with Egypt and Assyria in the international scene. "They have set up kings, but not from me; they have made princes and I knew it not" (8:4) says Yahweh through Hosea. Whether it be the division of the

---

[14]Cf. Hosea 5:5 (unless the parallelism points to "pride" as the iniquity meant); 8:7; 14:3,10; 13:9; 13:12; et al.

kingdom at the hand of Jeroboam or just the succession of corrupt rulers in Israel in Hosea's time,[15] it is still a vain trust in rulers who are not known to Yahweh. "All their kings are fallen, there is none among them that calleth unto me" he says again. Likewise, the country has made covenants with Assyria and sent goods to Egypt (12:2) in a vain attempt to establish a security. But this fluttering about like a silly dove (7:11ff) produced nothing but insecurity. Indeed, it resulted in nothing but the withdrawal of Yahweh, who is their real security, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek his face once again (5:15).

However, Hosea's major concern is with the sin of apostasy. When Israel entered Canaan and took over the agricultural way of life, Yahweh also took possession of that whole area of their life. The land is Yahweh's land (9:3). But the people have not recognized this:

> She did not know that it was I that gave her
> The corn and the wine and the oil,
> And multiplied unto her silver and gold.(2:10).

So they gave their sacrifices to the Baalim of Canaan and took part in the licentious practices of the Canaanite cult. These, and Israel's whole acceptance of the Canaanite cult, are characterized as adultery and harlotry (2:4-17; 4:11-12; 5:3-4; 9:1-4). He associates such wickedness with that of the Benjamites at Gibeah, which was also a sinfulness of perversion and of failure

---

[15]Cf. Harper, op. cit., p. cliii.

to act as true Israelites. Though he uses these as figures of Israel's apostasy from Yahweh, there can be little doubt that he uses them also as a literal description of the activity of Israel in her Canaanization of the worship of Yahweh. For, if the people continued to worship Yahweh at all they did so in terms of the cult of their neighbors and not in true covenant fashion. This cult militated against Israelite social custom, too, and resulted in the behaviour already discussed.[16]

It is with respect to this aspect of Israel's sin that Hosea uses the term "rebellion" most often. The people have "sinned against" Yahweh (4:7), have behaved themselves stubbornly "like a stubborn heifer" (4:16), have dealt treacherously against Yahweh (5:7; 6:7; 9:15; 14:1). It is also most often in this respect that Hosea charges the people with lack of understanding of, and of fidelity to, Yahweh. Yahweh has a quarrel with the land because there is no

> truth nor mercy [hesed],
> Nor knowledge of God in the land. (4:1).[17]

In one passage this "knowledge" is paralleled by "the law of thy God" (4:6), and in another passage the "covenant" which Israel has rebelled against is also paralleled by "my law" (8:1). It is not likely that Hosea is thinking of any specific formulation of "law"

---

[16] Cf. supra p. 103.

[17] Cf. also 4:6; 4:14e; 6:6; 9:17.

but probably only the "teaching" which it was the priests' duty to give to the people concerning the revealed will of Yahweh (cf. 4:6). But it is clear that Hosea considers Yahweh's will to be accessible to the people and it is also clear that he considers that the sin of the people, particularly the sin of impure worship, has been brought on by lack of knowledge on the one hand and deliberate rebellion on the other.

Like Amos, too, Hosea declares that their innumerable sacrifices are not a help to them. "With their flocks and with their herds they shall go to seek Yahweh, but they shall not find him" (5:6). For "I desire mercy [hesed] and not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings. But they, like men,[18] have rebelled against the covenant . . . " (6:6-7). "Let them sacrifice flesh and eat it, for Yahweh accepteth them not". (8:13). That Hosea rejected the whole idea of sacrifice has not so much evidence as that Amos did. He does seem on occasion to consider sacrifice, properly offered, to be pleasing to Yahweh (cf. 9:3-5). His objection must be that the whole sacrificial system, as the basic conception of religion, has become too interwoven with Canaanite cult symbols and Canaanite

---

[18] K^e^adham may refer to a place. The "there" in the next line suggests this. J.M.P. Smith, The Complete Bible: An American Translation, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1939), has rendered it "at Adamah" following Nowack's emendation "B^e^adhmah". Cf. Rowley, op. cit., p. 50, note 1.

meaning. He may not, therefore, go so far as Amos did (or Jeremiah later) but he certainly does declare that sacrifices have no place in Yahweh's service if they are not related to deeds of righteousness and justice.

The keynote of Hosea's prophecy, as has often been noted, is that Yahweh is faithful to his covenant with Israel even beyond any notion of what is required of him in the covenant, and that he asks a similar fidelity on the part of Israel. Hosea does not once use the word ḥen to describe this fidelity of Yahweh, which is the word we should have expected if the English word "love" were the best translation. It is ḥesed that he uses always and this word is used only where there is a special covenant tie.[19] George Adam Smith has used the translation "troth", and this is closer to the basic idea of firmness in strict adherence to all implications of the covenant-bond.

Where Amos declares that Israel's infidelity to the covenant (or, more correctly, to the revealed word of Yahweh) will almost inevitably bring destruction, Hosea insists that he will be faithful beyond the breaking of the covenant if only the people will become faithful to him again. It is this complete lack of fidelity, or even of the knowledge of the covenant to which Yahweh desires fidelity, evidenced in economic and social injustice, in political distrust, and in religious defection

---

[19] Cf. Lofthouse, "ḥen and ḥesed", op. cit., p. 34.

to the worship of other gods, that Hosea calls sin.

Isaiah of Jerusalem[20] lived in Judah and prophesied in Judah. He began his prophetic work about the same time as Hosea but continued through for forty years or more. He witnessed the downfall of the northern kingdom and experienced Assyrian sieges on his own city of Jerusalem.

> The ruling ideas of Isaiah's ministry are not materially different from those of the other great prophets of the same period, Amos, Hosea and Micah. All these writers are animated by the same fundamental convictions with regard to the nature and character of Jehovah, the God of Israel . . .[21]

Indeed, a summary of his prophecies on the sin of his people is not essentially different from that of Amos, except that in respect to sacrifice he is nearer akin to Hosea.

Like his brethren he saw great sin in the social and economic evils of his time. His prophecy begins[22] with a declaration that his people is sinful:

> Ah sinful nation,
> A people laden with iniquity,
> A seed of evil-doers,
> Children that deal corruptly;
> They have forsaken the Lord,

---

[20] making the usual distinction between First and Second Isaiah and excluding chapters 24-27 and other intrusive apocalyptic passages.

[21] J. Skinner, Isaiah I-XXXIX, (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge, University Press, 1909), p. xliii.

[22] The exact order of Isaiah's earliest prophecies is not clear. Some would put chapter 6 first. These words would still be among his earliest prophecies.

They have contemned the Holy One of Israel,
They are turned away backward. (1:4).

He very adequately represents what he means by "children that deal corruptly" in many of his later passages. There is murder (1:21), bribery (1:23), legal discrimination in the courts of "justice" against defenceless widows and orphans (1:23; 10:2), adulteration of goods to be sold and of payments to be made (1:22), deliberate oppression of the poor (3:14-15; 5:8ff), drunkenness (28:7ff), and many other features of life which are simply termed unrighteousness and unholiness. The people are not even ashamed for their ungodliness and "declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not" (3:9). The leaders of the people "decree unrighteous decrees" (10:1) and the prophets and other leaders of the community "teach lies" and cause the people to err (9:15-16). The large landowners keep adding "house to house" and "field to field" until the smaller landowners are completely squeezed out of their inheritance (5:8-10), a situation which we saw in the case of Ahab and Naboth to be absolutely unIsraelitish.

Isaiah is the first writer of the Old Testament to make a "clearly expressed connection between qōdesh (holiness) and tsedāqāh (righteousness)".[23] In 5:16 we read:

---

[23] Cf. Snaith, op. cit., pp. 52-54.

But the Lord of hosts is exalted through justice,
And God the Holy One is sanctified through
righteousness.[24]

There is involved the familiar idea that Yahweh is "exalted" above the people, and that Isaiah considered this exaltation to be partly in terms of power and majesty, both in creation and history, is shown in passages such as 28:17-19 and 13:4-6. But there is also introduced the idea that this exaltation, this seperation from common life, this sanctification, is characterized by "righteousness". When we see the many features of Israelite life which Isaiah terms "unrighteousness" we see something of what Isaiah considers to be the "holy" nature of Yahweh, i.e. his very inner nature.

In the vision experience described in chapter 6 there is also reference to the "holiness" of Yahweh. There in the temple Isaiah was deeply impressed by the awareness of the presence of Yahweh. The door-posts shook, the temple filled with smoke, angelic voices sounded in praise of Yahweh's holiness. But it is not just a sense of awe and fear which fills Isaian; it is rather a sense of his own sin and the sin of his people:

Woe is me, for I am undone;
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean
lips. (6:5).

---

[24]This second line in Hebrew is: הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ נִקְדַּשׁ בִּצְדָקָה i.e. The God, the Holy one is made holy in righteousness.

That this sense of uncleanness was not of ritual uncleanness is attested in the record of Isaiah's response to the commission to go and tell his people the word of God. In the little song of the vineyard in which Isaiah tells in a parable how Yahweh has planted his people, cultivated and nourished them, expecting great harvests from them, he declares that Yahweh looked for justice (mishpāt) and found oppression, that he looked for righteousness (tsedāqāh) and found only a cry for help (5:7).

Thus, Isaiah, like Amos and Hosea, declares that Israel's obligation within the covenant is to respond to the holiness of Yahweh by maintaining the same holiness within the covenant people. Their deeds of oppression, exploitation, injustice, drunkenness, murder, and all the rest, are offences against the holiness of Yahweh's people and must bring his active opposition and punishment.

Like them, also, he condemns the sacrificial customs of the people. Like Hosea he does not condemn the cult for itself. It was in the midst of that cult, in the Temple, that he first saw Yahweh as he really is (6:5) and it was by a coal taken from the sacrificial altar that his lips were cleansed of their sin so that he could utter Yahweh's word to the people (6:7). Moreover he refers with perfect naturalness to the keeping of feasts to Yahweh and the joyousness of these

customs (30:29).[25] Whether such sacrifices were a part of the covenant at Sinai or not they were certainly customary in this period and reflected the people's desire to honor their god and to strengthen the bonds of covenant with gifts.[26] But Isaiah declares that such gifts are offensive to Yahweh if the people by their deeds show no knowledge of the true character of his holiness, which is not just strength and power but justice and righteousness:

> To what purpose is the multitude of your
> sacrifices to me?
> I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams,
> And the fat of fed beasts;
> And I delight not in the blood of bullocks,
> or of lambs, or of he-goats,
> When ye come to appear before me,
> Who hath required this at your hand, to
> trample my courts?
> Bring no more vain oblations;
> . . . . . .
> Your hands are full of blood.
> Wash you, make you clean,
> Put away the evil of your doings
> From before Mine eyes;
> Cease to do evil, learn to do good;
> Seek justice, relieve the oppressed;
> Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.
> (1:11-12, 15-17).

In other words, sacrifice is a means of honoring God, but when the people insist on honoring God externally while they refuse to maintain the Israelitish character he demands in their communal life, it is a worthless

---

[25]The genuineness of this passage is disputed. Duhm, Skinner and Whitehouse defend it; Cheyne, Pfeiffer and others challenge it.

[26]Cf. Pedersen, Israel, II, 323, 330.

honor and one Yahweh will not accept. The sacrificial system had become "a commandment of men learned by rote" while the peoples' heart is far removed from their God and his expressed will (29:13).

The root of this sinful attitude is in the spirit of rebellion which is manifested in all Israel's ways. Yahweh chose the Israelites, reared them from childhood, intended good for them, but they rebelled (1:2; 30:1,9; 31:6). If only the people would be obedient they would enjoy good things, but since they refuse and rebel they must suffer destruction (1:19-20). All their punishment has come because of this rebellion (3:8). Paralleled to the more forceful idea of rebellion is the equally sinful idea of forsaking Yahweh (1:28; 1:4; 17:10; 22: 11-14).

This rebellion manifests itself in the social corruption of the normative life of Israel which we have already noted.[27] It also manifested itself in other ways. The first is in the forsaking of trust in Yahweh to form military alliances. She insisted on an alliance with Assyria against Rezin and Pekah despite the sign given through Isaiah to show that the two nations would be impotent in short order (Isa. 7). Again she insisted on an alliance with Egypt against Assyria in spite of one of Isaiah's most dramatic oracles (20:3-6). So he

---

[27] Cf. <u>supra</u> p. 109.

declared "Woe!" unto them:

> Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help,
> And rely on horses,
> And trust in chariots because they are many,
> And in horsemen because they are exceeding mighty;
> But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,
> Neither seek Yahweh (31:1).

Their rebellion is seen in this seeking of counsel and of help elsewhere than in Yahweh (30:1) even though they have his teaching to guide them (30:9). Isaiah urges the leaders to return to Yahweh (31:6) because these other helpers will utterly fail in the day of testing.

Allied with the turning away from Yahweh to alliances with other nations is the rebellion against Yahweh which is manifested in the worship of foreign idols.[28] But the rebellion in this respect must have been going much further in Isaiah's time than the usual customary provision for foreign shrines in cases of subservience. The people had countless images of silver and gold (2:8; 20; 10:11; 17:8; 30:22; 31:7). In 10:11 Isaiah equates these idols with the idols of Samaria which were always accounted one of the chief illustrations of sin in the northern kingdom. Idolatry of this nature is reckoned the greatest sin of all in the later prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel and II Isaiah) for it really denies the power of Yahweh in the lives of the people altogether. The ground for the later specific statement

---

[28]Domination by foreign nations usually carried with it the necessity (or wisdom) of religious compromises. Cf. Ahaz' Assyrian altar (II Ki. 16:10ff.) and the concessions to Jezebel in Israel.

is already laid in these early utterances against it in the eighth century prophets.

A third manifestation of the people's rebellion against Yahweh is the unreasonable pride which they had developed in their own powers.

> Their land is full of silver and gold,
> Neither is there any end of their treasures;
> Their land also is full of horses,
> Neither is there an end of their chariots.
> Their land also is full of idols;
> Everyone worshippeth the work of his own hands,
> . . . . . .
> The lofty looks of man shall be brought low,
> And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
> And Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day.
> (2:7-8, 11).

They have become "wise in their own eyes" (5:21), have dared to decide that "evil is good and good evil" (5:20) and to act on their own value judgement in these respects (cf. 5:23). They have even become so confident of their own judgement that they have dared Yahweh to prove them wrong:

> "Let him make speed, let him hasten his work,
> That we may see it;
> And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel
> draw nigh and come,
> That we may know it". (5:18-19).

Baab would equate human pride with the sin of idolatry:

> Idolatry is well understood in the Bible as differing from the pure worship of Israel's God in the fact of its personification and objectification of the human will in contrast with the superhuman transcendance of the true God. When an idol is worshipped, man is worshipping himself, his desires, his purposes, and his will.[29]

---

[29] Baab, Theology of the Old Testament, pp. 110, 112.

I think it is doubtful whether that equation can be made in every instance in the Old Testament[30] but it would certainly be true of both Hosea and Isaiah.

Rebellion is the root of sin in Isaiah. But Isaiah recognizes that ignorance is also responsible for much of what constitutes the people's sins. Animals know the will of their masters but Israel does not know her God (1:3). After the denunciation of unrighteousness in very specific terms in 5:1-12, he says that the people will go into captivity "for want of knowledge" (5:13). Now it is true that, like Hosea, he realizes that this want of knowledge is their own fault. They have rejected Yahweh's teaching and despised his word (5:24). They have gone elsewhere for counsel (30:1). But it is nonetheless ignorance as much as deliberate disobedience which is at the base of their sins.

One aspect of sin that Isaiah begins to develop is more or less his own. He does suggest a remedy for the people's condition and a method of salvation from their sin. It is to return to Yahweh's word. Amos had hinted at this possibility for the righteous, even if the others persisted in sinning; Hosea preached it, though he seems to have considered it impossible (cf. Hos. 5:4). But Isaiah seems to see it as a real

---

[30]Cf. Amos 5:26; Deut. 12:3; 16:22; 5:8; etc.

possibility and he preaches the return of a remnant (10: 20-21) as the hope of Israel and he even named one of his sons with the name "Shear-yashub" to signify it as truth. They that maintain the holiness of Israel which Yahweh requires are his true people and will be supported by him as a remnant to His glory.

Micah was a native of the border region of the southern kingdom and aimed his message particularly at the wicked cities of both Judah and Israel and at the upper classes which lived principally in the cities and epitomized the sins of the nation at their worst. His charges are against a corrupt economic and social system in which the poor are continually at a disadvantage before the power and oppression of the leaders. He attacks these leaders - rulers, prophets, priests and wealthy property owners (1:5; 3:1-12; 6:12;[31] cf. also Isa. 3:13f). He does not declare that the poor and oppressed are sinless, but insofar as they have not the power or opportunity to take part in the things he denounces they would be exempt from his charges of sin.

He has little to say about the worship of foreign gods or idols or about the immoralities associated with

---

[31]Chapters 6-7 are frequently denied to Micah; cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 559; H. Calkins, The Modern Message of the Minor Prophets, (New York, Harpers, 1947), p. 39, note 5. But G. A. Smith, The Book of the Twelve, pp. 303-330, argues for its genuineness. The arguments against the genuineness of chapter 6 I do not find very convincing.

the Canaanite religious cult.[32] But he does recognize their presence and declares that they will be destroyed in the destruction of the people. "All her graven images shall be beaten to pieces" and "all her idols will I lay desolate", "for of the hire of a harlot has she gathered them". (1:7).

In both respects he sums up Israel's sin as "rebellion". He declares that he is full of power "by the spirit of God, and of justice and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgressions [rebellions], and to Israel his sin" (3:8). And he proclaims that the punishment which will come upon Israel and Judah will come because of their "rebellion". These rebellions and sins are confined in his further definition largely to the abuses heaped upon the poor by the wealthy and powerful. This is not the strong and holy state of affairs which represents Yahweh's own character and will and therefore he will not support it. It is "unclean" and will arise to destroy those who have been responsible for it (cf. 2:8-10).

A comparison of the concept of sin in these four eighth century prophets reveals a similarity of emphasis and of underlying conviction regarding the character of Yahweh's "holiness" and the true nature of his holy people.

---

[32]Calkins, op. cit., p. 58, says: "Unlike Amos and Hosea he has nothing to say about idolatry or hideous immoralities." (Underlining mine.)

In the first place they all believe that Yahweh has made known his own character and what represents the holiness he requires of his people. Where the people have carelessly ignored this knowledge or have set themselves in rebellion against it they have sinned.

In the second place they all declare, Isaiah explicitly and the rest implicitly, that his character and the nature of the people he expects and will support is distinguished by justice and righteousness, by the maintenance of the heritage (mishpāt) of the whole group and of each member of the group within the covenant. They seem even to go further and to characterize this justice and righteousness as favoring particularly those members of the group who are unable to maintain their own position against superior pressures.[33] Where the people, particularly the wealthy, the rulers, the judges and others in authority, oppress the poor and manipulate the ordinary safeguards of the community against discrimination to their own advantage, they have sinned.

In the third place they all believe that Yahweh is active in his support of his holy people and is able to defend them against any threats from other nations. On the other hand he is also able to turn the forces of nature against them and to use other nations against

---

[33]Cf. Snaith, op. cit., pp. 68ff.

them as punishment for their infidelity. There they have turned to the worship of other gods to seek material advantages and where they have sought military aid from foreign nations, refusing to put their whole trust in Yahweh and His ability to prosper and defend them, they have sinned.

Finally, they all agree that the sacrificial system, while it may be a legitimate expression of their desire to honor him and to strengthen their bond with him through gifts, has no legitimacy if it is counterposed to deeds which undermine the strong, holy, united people he desires, and is particularly abhorrent if mixed with foreign elements. Indeed, the exaggeration of sacrificial ritual is sinful because it takes the place of that union in holiness and righteousness with his people which Yahweh intends.

There are two important elements of the concept of sin which are just beginning to emerge in these prophets. H. W. Robinson claims that one of the limitations of the early idea of sin is its "defective sense of individuality", or its strong sense of "corporate personality".[34] This is also the undertone which pervades the declarations of these prophets. Their indictment is levelled at the nation and the punishment they promise will be wreaked on the nation as a whole.

---

[34]Cf. Christian Doctrine of Man, p. 46.

Though the priests may be charged with unfaithfulness to the law (cf. Hos. 4:6b; Mic. 3:11; et al.), though the leaders may be guilty of misleading (Mic. 3:9; Hos. 5:1; Am. 6:1, et al.), though individuals may often be in the minds of the prophets as they inveigh against their sins (cf. Isa. 5:8-24; Am. 8:4ff; Hos. 4:11-14; et al.), it is the nation as a whole which will be punished, for the iniquity of the few (or the many) has permeated the whole personality of the people. Nonetheless, the re-definition of sin in terms of righteousness and justice must have begun the breakdown of corporatism in its strongest sense and established something of the principle that the wealthy mighty were more to be punished than the poor oppressed. And the constant preaching of "return" unto Yahweh led to the idea that if some returned and others did not Yahweh might yet save a "remnant" from the general destruction. Here again the seed of individualism in the concept of sin and punishment is introduced.

In both respects the emergence of this idea is from the implications of the covenant of Sinai. There the people had declared: "All that Yahweh has said, we will do and hear [obey]." (Exod. 24:7). The covenant relationship was of an obedient, hearing people to a righteous, speaking God. If some of the people, then, fulfilled the requirements of this relationship, while others did not, there was almost bound to come that

differentiation in indictment and punishment, even though the shackles of corporatism were not at once or entirely shaken off.[35]

The second important element of the concept of sin which begins to emerge in these prophets, though ever so faintly, is an understanding of the inwardness of sin. By and large the sinfulness which is condemned is the wicked activity of the people. Injustice and unrighteousness are condemned as outward acts:

> Ah sinful nation,
> A people laden with iniquity,
> A seed of evil-doers,
> Children that deal corruptly. (Isa. 1:4).

Even the haughtiness and pride which they condemn is the outward act:

> Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
> And walk with stretched-forth necks and
> wanton eyes,
> Walking and mincing as they go,
> And making a tinkling with their feet. (Is. 3:16).

A reading of the catalogue of sins in these prophets shows how their eyes were fixed on outward acts.

Yet there is the faint beginning of the understanding of the intentions as sinful as well. Micah declares "Woe!" to them that "devise" iniquity and "work" evil upon their beds (2:1a). The iniquity and the evil

---

[35] Cf. Pedersen, Israel, I, 131-2, 435; also J. Hempel, Das Ethos des alten Testaments. (BZAW; Berlin, Topelmann, 1938), p. 185, and Wright, "Terminology of Old Testament Religion", op. cit., pp. 404-6, where both discuss "obedience" as a basic feature of the Old Testament relationship of man and God.

are outward acts which are only executed "when the morning is light", but the devising of them and the "working" of them in their minds is certainly a part of the condemnation. The whole attitude of rebellion, unwillingness to hear God's voice, rejecting of his teaching and despising of his word (Isa. 5:24) is an attitude of mind and heart.[36] We are accustomed to make the intention prior to the deed, but the idea that the intention was a part of the sin only dimly emerges in these prophets and, indeed, did not develop to full flower until very late in Old Testament literature.[37]

From the eighth century prophets to those of the latter half of the seventh century there is an interval of over fifty years. Jeremiah and Zephaniah began their prophetic work about 625 B.C. But the book of Deuteronomy is generally considered to have been written during the reign of Manasseh (ca. 692-639 B.C.), roughly about

---

[36]Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 437.

[37]Cf. R. Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, (New York, Scribner's, 1941), I, 223. He claims that "pride" was always the "primary concern of the prophets" but that they saw that out of pride always arose injustice. Cf. also Eichrodt, op. cit., I, 199, and Baab, op. cit., p. 110. But it seems to me that the Israelites first saw the external acts of injustice as sin and considered "pride" as one of these acts. A man oppressed his fellows by using his wealth and power unfairly, prospered and paid his dues to God. Then finding himself without trouble or adversary he became proud. Pride was one of the external acts which were sin. The idea that pride was a root out of which other sins grew, I believe, just begins to emerge in these prophets.

650 B.C. It is regularly identified as the Law Book which was found in the Temple in 621 B.C. (II Ki. 22: 8ff).[38] It reflects the influence of the eighth century prophets but is concerned to work as much of the prophetic ideal into the forms of religion as it believed would be acceptable. It represents an adaptation then, of the prophetic ideals to the popular forms of religious life.

Here we find the same ethical interest. Chapters 22-24 list the various kinds of "evil which must be put away out of Israel". Harlotry on the part of a woman later betrothed (22:20-21); adultery with a married or betrothed woman (22:22-24); kidnapping into slavery (24:70); withholding a day's wages from a laborer overnight (24:14-15); all these are called evil or "sin". Other humanitarian requirements are commanded by the book. Unfair weights for buying or selling, "even all that do unrighteously are an abomination unto the Lord thy God" (25:13-16).

Running throughout the provisions of the Deuteronomic Code, and through the editorial work of men of the Deuteronomic mind on the historical books,[39]

---

[38]For a survey of opinions on the date of Deuteronomy cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, pp. 131-7.

[39]The editors of these books are later than the seventh century but reflect almost exactly Deuteronomic attitudes. Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, pp. 252-8; 284-5; 304-6; 333-6; 377-395.

is the recurring prophetic note that the real basis of sin is conscious, open rebellion against Yahweh. The book opens on this note. The first four chapters are an historical retrospect which dwell at some length on the refusal of the Israelites to accept the recommendation of the spies to go up and invade Canaan. "Ye would not go up but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God" (1:26). The people admitted their sin (1:41, cf. also 9:24). Perhaps even more is this note sounded in the editing of other books. In II Kings 18: 11-12 the editor declares that the reason for the Assyrian deportation of Israel is that "they hearkened not to the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed [rebelled against] his covenant, even all that Moses commanded, and would not hear it nor do it".

This statement sums up much that is typical of the Deuteronomic attitude to sin. For it defines sin as "not hearkening", but instead "rebelling against" "his covenant", which is "all that Moses commanded". The prophets, too, had defined sin in terms of "hearkening not" (i.e. lack of knowledge) and of "rebellion". But they had said little about the covenant, though I believe they presupposed it. They had never defined it. But Deuteronomy does define it, and defines it essentially as "everything which Moses commanded", going on to delineate exactly what Moses had commanded. This book was the first codification of the terms of the covenant.

> The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb, the Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord spoke with you face to face . . . (Deut. 5:2-4).
>
> and ye said: Behold the Lord our God hath shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire . . . Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God may say; and thou shalt speak unto us all that the Lord our God may speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. (Deut. 5:21a,24).

The covenant was central and the terms of the covenant were set forth in "statutes" and "commandments" and "judgements". Amos had implored the people to let "justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream", but he had not defined justice and righteousness, even though he had illustrated their neglect quite fully. Deuteronomy proceeded to identify righteousness with the observance of "all this commandment which the Lord our God hath commanded us" (6:25). Eichrodt points out that "accordingly, on the side of men the keeping of the covenant is emphasized (Deut. 29:8; I Ki. 11:11); and conversely they are warned against transgressing or breaking the covenant (עזב,מאס,הפר,עבר,שכח)".[40]

Now it is true that the central concern of the laws of Deuteronomy was to centralize worship in Jerusalem[41] and to purge it of all that was not in conformity to the pattern of worship in that central sanctuary. But

---

[40]Eichrodt, op. cit., I, 17.

[41]Cf. Staples, op. cit., p. 75: "The worship of

in denouncing the people for sin little is actually made of this feature of the code. It is almost solely the worship of other gods, and particularly the setting up of images and sacred poles, which is called sinful, evil, and iniquitous.[42] In the books of Kings the stereotyped indictment of rulers for following after the "sin wherewith Jeroboam made Israel to sin" does undoubtedly refer to his establishment of worship at shrines other than Jerusalem, namely Bethel and Dan. But it is not clear whether this sin consisted of worship at other shrines or the representation of Yahweh by an image, or the setting up of other gods.[43] Other kings are certainly

---

any other deity is the great sin, and the worship of Yahweh in any shrine but Jerusalem is equally a sign of rank apostasy." The city Jerusalem is not named (cf. Deut. 12:5; 16:5-6; et al.) but Josiah's interpretation of Deuteronomic references as such met with later favor and was undoubtedly correct.

[42]There are practically no condemnations of worship outside Jerusalem. Reference to centralization of worship is made only in the affirmative. There are innumerable references condemning image worship, or worship of other gods, or worship in the manner of other peoples - 4:25; 7:2-5, 25-26; 8:19; 9:16-18, 21; 11:23; 12:30-31; 13:7-12; 17:2-5; 18:9-14; 20:17-18; 29:17, 24; 30:15-20. In many of these, the practices are called "sin", "evil", "abomination to Yahweh", "forsaking the covenant", and so on.

[43]Pfeiffer states that the "sin of Jeroboam" was taken by the post-exilic writers to mean the worship of other gods rather than the making of images of Yahweh. Deut. 32:12 specifically states that Yahweh led the people out of Egypt and no strange god (i.e. Aaron's calf) was with him. Cf. "Images of Yahweh", JBL, XLV (1926), 216.

condemned for worshipping images and other gods. Ahab not only followed Jeroboam's sin but "went and served Baal and worshipped him, and reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he had built in Samaria, and . . . made Asherah" (I Ki. 16:31ff). Jehu is generally commended but a rider is added to the commendation for he "departed not from after them [the sins of Jeroboam], the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan" (II Ki. 10:29). The destruction of the high-places and cult objects of the land is ordered as much for its association with "their gods" as it is for decentralization of worship (cf. 12:2-3).

Centralization of worship, then, was a means to an end, and that end was the worship of one god, Yahweh, and the purification of his worship from the accretions of foreign cults. It is the worship of other gods and the use of the abominations of the foreign sanctuaries that was the sin.

There are two distinct differences between the Deuteronomic attitude and that of the prophets which went before. The first is that already mentioned - the codifying of the will of Yahweh into objective legislation. This was further rigidified by the establishment of a restricted priesthood which alone had the right to interpret Yahweh's will (10:8-9; 17:8-13). To act otherwise than this Levitical priesthood should declare to be Yahweh's will was to act presumptuously and was

punishable with death "to exterminate the evil from Israel" (17:12).[44] Yahweh also had appointed prophets to speak his word, but the people must be sure that such a prophet was not himself speaking presumptuously (18:20). The only test is a post facto one and little help to those faced with the prophet's utterances. It seems to me that in the case of both the priest and the prophet the safest guide was the Deuteronomic Code itself. If one obeyed that he would not be in danger of speaking his own word or following his own fallible conscience. This emphasis on the objective code of law thus led to an externality of sin. This is further shown by the fact that "sin" or "iniquity" must be established by more than one witness (19:15-17). It must be an act which could be witnessed and declared by more than one eye-witness to have been a breach of the covenant-law. The hint of inwardness in the earlier prophets is not developed here but submerged altogether.

The second difference between Deuteronomy and the prophets that went before is its acceptance of the sacrificial cult. It did away with those features of the cult which implied the worship of other gods or the influence of foreign patterns of worship, but it accepted the common Israelite cult at its face value. Chapter

---

[44] One of the aspects of Jeroboam's sin was his appointment of people other than Levites to act as priests (cf. I Ki. 12:31; 13:34).

12 sets forth the specific requirements of sacrifice, including a great variety, and many other passages in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic editors accept without comment the validity of the sacrificial cult.[45] But it is to be noted that there is not the slightest hint that the sacrificial system was to be interpreted as a substitute for righteousness or an atonement for sins committed.[46] Sacrifices were rather given in rejoicing for all the goodness of Yahweh to them (cf. 12:12). The litany of praise in chapter 26 is a recital of the historic goodness of Yahweh to Israel as a race and of the abundant goodness of Yahweh to the individual in the harvest, and this litany was to be recited on the occasion of the offering of the first-fruits of the land. As Buchanan Gray concludes:

> Sacrifice was [in the pre-exilic period] more often eucharistic than propitiatory, and it was more often offered with feelings of joy and security than in fear and contrition.[47]

This is the case in Deuteronomy. And it seems that this book was not retreating from the position of the earlier prophets in theory, though it was compromising with the popular interest in sacrifice, for many undoubtedly

---

[45]Cf. Deut. 16:2; 27:5-7; I Sam. 3:15-14; 2:17.

[46]II Ki. 12:17 does refer to "forfeit-money" (כֶּסֶף אֲשָׁם) and "sin-money" (כֶּסֶף חַטָּאוֹת) to be paid into the treasury of the temple. This might be a forerunner of the later sin-offering of the Priestly Code.

[47]Gray, op. cit., p. 95; cf. also p. 47.

continued to substitute it for the obedience and righteousness which the code demanded.

However, in dissociating religious sacrifice from the daily slaughter of animals for food by commanding sacrifice only at the central sanctuary and only at the great festivals of the year, the Deuteronomic code took away from the people the excessive use of sacrifice which had been the rule in an earlier century. Religion would tend to be transferred from the acts of sacrifice to the acts of life and, of necessity, gain in ethical significance.

Moreover the Deuteronomic code at least once makes explicit what must have been the almost inevitable result of making religion a matter of obedience to an ethical code. It states the principle that every man shall suffer the punishment of his own sin and no longer will fathers receive punishment for their sons' sins, nor sons for their fathers' (24:16; quoted in II Kings 14:6).

One of the most unfortunate results of the Deuteronomic attitude toward righteousness and sin was the immediate general conclusion that fulfilment of the code must bring reward and disobedience to the code punishment. The obverse of this formula was more objectionable - that suffering must presuppose sin and prosperity righteousness. This formula which we have come to term the "Deuteronomic formula" was applied by

the editors to the historical books and it was applied by later thinkers to the lives of the people, becoming a stumbling-block to many (cf. Ecclesiastes) and a perplexity to others (cf. Habakkuk, Job, many of the Psalmists).

Zephaniah prophesied during the period between the end of Manasseh's reign and the finding of the Deuteronomic Code in the temple by Josiah. It was also during the brief threat of invading hordes from the north. His picture of Israel's religious life and expectation is what we should expect in this setting. The sins he describes are familiar from the earlier prophets and Deuteronomy but are here exhibited with an intensity that betrays the laxity of Manasseh's reign toward foreign elements of religion. The people have forsaken Yahweh to worship Baal (1:4) and the host of heaven (1:5); they swear by Malcam, a foreign god (1:5), and emulate the customs of foreignors (1:8-9) considering Yahweh to be completely indifferent to their behaviour (1:12). The leaders in political and religious life are corrupt (3:3-4). The punishment of all this sin against Yahweh (1:17) will be the destruction of Israel as well as Canaan, Moab and Assyria, these latter because they have been the sources of Israel's corruption (2:4-15). There is no relief from the picture of doom which he draws.[48]

---

[48] 3:8-20 is almost universally regarded as a

Nahum's prophecy is of little importance for an understanding of the idea of sin. His song is an exultant one over the downfall of Nineveh. It is not entirely personal vindication, however. He does show the hand of Yahweh in the destruction of the city (3:5-6) and the cause of the downfall to be Nineveh's wrongs against other nations - cruelty, treachery, selfishness and greed. He calls this "wickedness" though he does not specifically mention sin.

Habakkuk is probably the first thinker in Israel to be troubled by discrepancy between the facts of Israel's existence and the Deuteronomic assurances of peace and prosperity for the righteous. He was active in the period between the break-up of Assyrian domination of the west and the Babylonian imperialism which succeeded it. However we may arrange the first two chapters,[49] the problem remains the same: what is the eventual answer to the sinfulness which fills the land with its violence and seems to be to the advantage of the sinful:

> Why dost thou show me iniquity,
> And beholdest mischief?
> And why are spoiling and violence before me.
> So that there is strife and contention ariseth,
> Therefore the law is slacked,
> And right never goeth forth;
> For the wicked doth beset the righteous. (1:3-4).

---

later addition, softening, or even reversing, the earlier genuine prophecies.

[49] Cf. G. A. Smith, Book of the Twelve, II, 115-134, for various reconstructions of the text to explain difficulties in the present arrangement.

The earlier prophets had been content to denounce the sinfulness and demand repentance. Habakkuk wants an answer to a problem. The preliminary answer: that the Chaldeans will wipe out the violence and sinfulness, is not ultimately satisfactory because it simply substitutes a worse violence for a lesser one. The ultimate answer to which Habakkuk is led is that the soul of him who is not upright will collapse[50] but the righteous (צַדִּיק) will live because of his firmness in his life.[51] Micah had declared the same faith earlier:

> Do I change, O house of Jacob?
> Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?
> Are these his doings?
> Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? (Mic. 2:7).

Both are giving expression to the central feature of covenant thought, that if Yahweh's people are righteous, i.e. have fulfilled their obligations to the covenant, they will be firmly upheld by Yahweh and will not collapse. On the other hand, the wicked, the "not upright", have no support from their God and their present seeming prosperity is a delusion since they must

---

[50] Adopting an emendation suggested by G. W. Wade, The Book of the Prophet Habakkuk, (Westminster Commentaries; London, Methuen, 1929), p. 133: "Behold he collapseth whose soul is not upright in him." reading עֻפְלָה for עֻפָּל ; cf. Isa. 51:20. But any reading of the verse would give essentially the same sense.

[51] Cf. Pedersen, Israel, I, 414, 431-4.

ultimately fail and pass away. It is difficult in the context of Habakkuk's short prophecy to determine whether he applies this to the whole nation only or to individuals as distinct "upright" or "wicked" personalities within the nation.

The prophecies of Jeremiah are difficult to place in any discussion which divides the pre-exilic from the exilic and post-exilic writers. He was active during the comparatively lengthy period between 626 and 586 B.C. Most of his oracles came from before the first deportation in 597 B.C. and even those uttered after this first conquest of the people were not sufficiently conditioned by the general mood of the exilic period to be substantially in a different social and theological climate and therefore to merit treating him as an exilic prophet.

One cannot read far in the oracles of Jeremiah without recognizing a kinship with the eighth century prophets in many respects. Their underlying presuppositions are the same and it would be strange if he did not express himself against many of the same conditions as they had done. The catalogue of social sins is essentially the same:

> Also in thy skirts is found the blood
> Of the souls of the innocent poor;
> Thou didst not find them breaking in;
> Yet for all these things
> Thou saidst: "I am innocent,
> Surely his anger is turned away from me".

Behold, I will enter into judgement with thee,
Because thou sayest: "I have not sinned".
(2:34-35).

And they deceive every one his neighbor,
And truth they speak not;
They have taught their tongue to speak lies,
They weary themselves to commit iniquity. (9:4).

Your iniquities have turned away these things,
And your sins have withholden good from you.
For among my people are found wicked men;
They pry as fowlers lie in wait;
They set a trap, they catch men.
As a cage is full of birds,
So are their houses full of deceit;
Therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.
(5:25-27).

Along with gross unethical behaviour such as murder, oppression, and enriching themselves through deliberate traps and deceitfulness, Jeremiah also condemns adultery (5:8), oppression of strangers, widows and orphans (7:6), stealing (7:9), defrauding laborers of their wages (22:13), and other less specific social wickedness. Justice and righteousness are keynotes with Jeremiah as with Amos, and the neglect of them in Yahweh's people is accounted sin (5:1; 7:5; et al.). "Justice and righteousness in the earth; . . . in these things I delight, saith Yahweh" (9:23).

There is not so much reference to the sin of putting trust in military alliances in Jeremiah as in either Isaiah or Hosea, but the thought is not absent in some of his utterances.

How greatly dost thou cheapen thyself
To change thy way?

> Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt also,
> As thou wast ashamed of Asshur.
> . . . . . .
> For the Lord hath rejected them in whom
> thou didst trust,
> And thou shalt not prosper in them. (2:36-37).

And in a context in which he spoke of the people being delivered up to their enemies he also warned against trusting in man and making flesh their strength (17: 5,7).

Like the earlier prophets, too, Jeremiah characterized these evidences of failure to do Yahweh's will as being the result of deliberate rebellion (5: 23-25) or of deliberately treacherous dealing with God's demands upon them (5:11-13), or of the stubborn following after their own desires in contradiction to what they knew to be God's desire for them (18:12; 9: 12-13; 7:23-26; et al.). The people refused even to listen to the words of God (5:25; 7:23-26; 8:9; 9:12-13; 13:9ff; 22:20-23). In contrast to this sort of behaviour Jeremiah praised the Rechabites for their strict obedience to the commands of their tribal father despite the difficulty of those commands and despite all the temptations put before them to disobey (Chap. 35). He called upon Israel to amend its "evil way" or be destroyed.

In defining the commands of God, the words of God or the will of God, which the people so deliberately disobeyed, Jeremiah was much influenced by the Deuteronomic Code and the reform which had been instituted on

its requirements. It is difficult to determine to what extent the relationship of Jeremiah to Deuteronomy is simply the influence of the code on Jeremiah and to what extent it may be actual editorial work on the book of Jeremiah by later Deuteronomic editors. The recurrence of specifically Deuteronomic vocabulary[52] might well suggest the latter. On the other hand, the same ideas and judgements appear in passages in Jeremiah which do not exhibit the Deuteronomic vocabulary and which might be considered free from editorial work, and this fact might well suggest the former interpretation.[53]

In his earliest recorded oracles, before the Deuteronomic Code was ever discovered in the Temple in Jerusalem, Jeremiah takes up the theme of the people's apostasy from true Yahweh worship. The reason he gives for the coming destruction of the people which he saw in the vision of the pot blown upon from the north was that the people "have forsaken me, and have offered unto other gods and worshipped the work of their own hands" (1: 16).[54] He declares that they have "gone far from me and

---

[52]Cf. Driver, Introduction, pp. 275-7, for a consideration of vocabulary parallels. Pfeiffer, Introduction, pp. 504-5, thinks the vocabulary and most of the ideas which seem most Deuteronomic are the result of a complete re-writing of Jeremiah's book by Baruch, his scribe, after the death of Jeremiah.

[53]Cf. chapters 2 and 13. Pfeiffer, p. 504, who sees more Deuteronomic editing than most, does not list these chapters as showing it to any extent.

[54]Usually identified with the Scythian scare about 626 B.C., but also identified with the Babylonian

have walked after things of nought" (2:5) and that the prophets have prophesied "by Baal and walked after things that do not profit" (2:8).

During the period of Josiah's reform when Jeremiah was, at least for a time, enthusiastic about the possibilities of the reform and the book of the law on which it was based, he condemned Judah for having "turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers" and having gone "after other gods to serve them" (11: 9ff).

During the reign of Jehoiakim he spoke against the religious apostasy of the people within the very precincts of the Temple itself (Ch. 7), and in another oracle he promised "double" punishment for the iniquity and sin of the people "because they have profaned my land; they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable things and their abominations" (16:18).

Even when bewailing the exiling of many of the choice people of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 597, he does not hesitate to point out that Yahweh has brought this on them because of "the greatness of thine iniquity", "thine adulteries, and thy neighings,

---

successes about 612 B.C. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 494, note 10, thinks it was first uttered in face of the Scythian peril and then rewritten at the time of the Babylonian invasion. For a good discussion of most views, cf. J. P. Hyatt, "The Peril from the North to Jeremiah", JBL, LIX (Dec. 1940), pp. 499-513.

the lewdness of thy harlotries, on the hills and in the field" (13:22,27).

In all of these passages Jeremiah has followed the Deuteronomic emphasis of making the worst expression of sin apostasy. Moreover, in his oracles before the downfall of the city of Jerusalem, he also follows largely the Deuteronomic lead in defining the requirements of Yahweh in terms of a stated covenant.

> They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the stubbornness of their evil heart; therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did them not. (11:8).

> And many nations shall pass by this city and they shall say every man to his neighbor: Wherefore hath Yahweh done this unto this great city? Then they shall answer: Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh, their God, and worshipped other gods and served them. (22:8-9).

It seems that, at least for a brief period during the height of the Deuteronomic Reform, Jeremiah defined righteousness in terms of the prescriptions of the written Code and sin as its breach or neglect.

But there seem to be two factors which brought him militantly against this position even before the downfall of his beloved city posed the problem in a unique manner.

The first was the false security which the priests and cult prophets sought to nourish in the people by an appeal to renew their required devotion of sacrifices, fasting and stated prayers in the Temple. Josiah had

been killed in the battle of Megiddo; Jehoiakim had been set up as a puppet king by the Egyptians; the Babylonians were taking over the empire of the Assyrians and loomed as a new threat of imperialistic warfare on the eastern horizon. There was need for a sense of certainty and security. The priests and prophets seem to have seized upon the Deuteronomic cultic requirements and proclaimed to the people that if they would fulfil these meticulously in the Temple it would stand inviolate in their midst as a harbor for them in strife. The tradition of Isaiah's similar (though ethically more demanding) declaration and the subsequent unsuccessful seige of Jerusalem must have done much to encourage them in this attempt.[35] Jeremiah delivered a scathing attack on this move in the Temple itself. He reminded the people of the other requirements of Yahweh according to the covenant witnessed to in the Deuteronomic Code and how the people were failing them. But the attempt of the priests and other prophets to settle upon the fulfilment of written laws as the basis of the security of the people must have been a first factor in turning Jeremiah away from his enthusiasm for the Code and the Reform. In like manner the legalistic way in which the people released their slaves to gain Yahweh's blessing

---

[35]Cf. W. Eichrodt, "The Right Interpretation of the Old Testament", trans. D. H. Ward, Theology Today, (Apr. 1950), pp. 16ff.

when the city was again in danger (Jer. 34) and then re-enslaved them when the danger was seemingly past, would make plain the failure of a written, external code to fulfil its purpose in making the people true to the purpose of their God for them.

The second factor which turned Jeremiah away from enthusiasm for the Deuteronomic Code was his own personal experience of suffering and persecution and his observation of the prosperity and well-being of many who paid no heed to the demands of Yahveh. This was also the problem which Habakkuk faced on the national scale and which the writer of the book of Job faced again much later on the personal scale.

> Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?
> Wherefore are all they secure that deal very
> treacherously? (12:1b).
>
> And thy words were unto me a joy and the
> rejoicing of my heart
> . . . . . .
> I sat not in the assembly of them that make
> merry, nor rejoiced;
> . . . . . .
> Why is my pain perpetual,
> And my wound incurable, so that it refuseth
> to be healed?
> Wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful
> brook,
> As waters that fail? (15:16-18).
>
> Shall evil be recompensed for good?
> For they have digged a pit for my soul.
> Remember how I stood before Thee
> To speak good for them,
> To turn away thy wrath from them. (18:20).
>
> Wherefore came I out of the womb
> To see labor and sorrow,
> That my days should be consumed in shame? (20:18).

These are a few of the "confessions" of Jeremiah when he is faced with the problem posed by the Deuteronomic formula regarding sin and wickedness, and they indicate that he could not accept an easy, superficial answer. Indeed his experience forced him away from seeking his answer to this problem on the social level or the corporate level. He, himself, was driven into an intimate companionship with God and came to understand real religion "as a personal relationship between himself and God".[56]

Thus his attempt to answer the questions which the powerful presence of sins amongst his people raised is moved into the comparatively new realm of the relation of the individual to his God. This emphasis had been prepared for in the general ethical approach of the eighth century prophets. Deuteronomy stated explicitly (though only once) that every man shall be put to death for his own sin (Deut. 24:16). That was the implication of the prophetic utterances on sin which had prepared the ground for the Deuteronomic Code. Jeremiah also stated this principle explicitly on two occasions. In chapter 17, dealing with the sins of his people, he says:

> I, the Lord, search the heart,
> I try the reins,

---

[56] Cf. A. S. Peake, The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament, (London, Robert Cully, 1904), pp. 11-15.

> Even to give to every man according to his ways,
> According to the fruit of his doings. (17:10).

In chapter 31, almost as an introduction to his declaration of the coming of a New Covenant, he dismisses the old saying which had expressed the popular and long-held belief that God punishes the sins of one generation in another generation much later and replaces it with this newly-explicit idea:

> In those days they shall say no more:
> "The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
> But the children's teeth are set on edge".
> But every man shall die for his own iniquity,
> every man that eateth sour grapes, his teeth
> shall be set on edge. (31:29-30).

This principle of individual responsibility for sin is implicit also in Jeremiah's second important contribution to the concept of sin - the explicit formulation of the idea of the inwardness of sin. Isaiah had prepared the way for such an explicit formulation by his identification of sin with pride and rebellion, but the sins he had denounced had been the outward manifestations of these inward attitudes, and we are in doubt as to how well he comprehended their inwardness. We are left in no doubt by Jeremiah.

> The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron,
> And with the point of a diamond;
> It is graven upon the tablets of their heart,
> As on the horns of your altars. (17:1).

> The heart is deceitful above all things,
> And it is exceedingly weak - who can know
> it? (17:9).

The people are characterized by "a revolting and a rebellious heart", they do not say in their heart "Let us fear God" (5:23). And Jeremiah connects this fact with the iniquities and sins which have kept back God's blessing from them.

Jeremiah and Deuteronomy are the first writings to make use of the image of the "uncircumcised heart" and share this term only with Ezekiel and the Holiness Code. The nations around Judah have always been looked down upon by Judah because they were uncircumcised and therefore excluded from the covenant with Yahweh - they were sinners. But Jeremiah says that if they are uncircumcised in the flesh, "all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart" (9:25) and are also sinful. So the only hope of the people is to remedy this inner impurity:

> Circumcise yourselves to the Lord,
> And take away the foreskins of your heart,
> Ye men of Judah and inhabitants of
> Jerusalem;
> Lest my fury go forth like fire,
> And burn that none can quench it,
> Because of the evil of your doings. (4:4).
>
> O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness,
> That thou mayest be saved. (4:14a).

The repentance and inward change of heart which Jeremiah vainly hoped for did not come. The destruction of the city and the captivity of many of its leading citizens, which he had warned must happen if the people did not cease their reliance upon their human strength

and their apostasy from Yahweh, did come. Though it was a confirmation of his prophetic work, it was a blow to his own heritage of hope for a glorious future for his people. The covenant of Moses, which for a time he seems to have felt had been reinstated with power by the Deuteronomic reform, was destroyed and he was sure, despite the facile prophecies of Hannaniah and others that the punishment would be short, that it would encompass more than a generation at best. This was the final blow to any hope that there might be a repentance and a return to the life that the covenant had required. That covenant lay discountenanced before the whole world as Jerusalem lay ravaged and depopulated.

> But in the ruin of his people . . . he recognized the birth-pangs of a new and better order - a religion "in spirit and in truth" which he, more than any other man up to his time, had foreshadowed in agony of soul and in flashes of blissful illumination.[57]

This new order is foreseen in his declaration of the New Covenant which Yahweh is to make with Israel and Judah.

> This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I shall be their God and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: "Know the Lord"; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more. (31:33-34).

---

[57]Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 517.

It is a theological problem whether the forgiveness of sin and iniquity here is to precede the making of the covenant or whether it is to follow it, but that the absence of sin and iniquity was thought by Jeremiah to be a part of this new relationship in which the law was written on the heart and every person knew God personally, seems incontrovertible.

Jeremiah has thus shifted the emphasis in the concept of sin from the external act to the inward condition of the heart and will, and from the corporate social life of the nation to the personal life of the individual,[58] and has set the tone for the rest of the literature of Israel's religion, even the priestly system which seems so far removed from him.

From this study of the concept of sin in the seventh century prophetic utterances we see both similarity to and advance from the position of the eighth century prophets. Like their predecessors they equate the ethical and moral laxity and indifference of their people with sin and iniquity and wickedness. They see in this seeming indifference actual rebellion against the will of their God. In this they made little advance. Indeed, Zephaniah did no more than repeat for his own generation what had been the position of his forerunners without any advance and without the relief of a

---

[58]Cf. H. W. Robinson, Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, pp. 89, 168-9.

possibility of the salvation of a repentant nation or of a portion of it.

Deuteronomy did introduce a new equation into the concept of sin by setting forth a specific codification of the revealed will of Yahweh and, in effect, equating sin with the breach of that code. In this it was followed to some extent by both Habakkuk and Jeremiah.[59]

This new, more rigid attitude toward the definition of sin, is reflected in a magnified use of the word שָׁמַע which seems to acquire an almost technical meaning "to obey". The word is used hundreds of times in the whole of the Old Testament. Most of these occurrences use it in the ordinary sense of "to hear" the words or of the actions of someone. But there are a considerable number where this other, more technical, meaning occurs. Altogether there are well over two hundred such occurrences[60] and well over half of them are found in the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.[61] Outside these books the occurrences are very thinly

---

[59] In Jeremiah particularly in the earlier prophecies. In Habakkuk the final answer to the prophet's problem: "The righteous shall live by their faith" is best understood in terms of some external norm of "righteousness"; cf. use of צָדִיק and רָשָׁע to denote "innocent" and "guilty" before a judge.

[60] It is difficult to state the clear meaning of all passages but the proportion of those in Jeremiah and Deuteronomy to the total must be fairly accurate.

[61] Deuteronomy, 38 times; Jeremiah, 85 times.

spread amongst most of the other Old Testament books.[62] Jeremiah frequently parallels the phrases "to sin" and "to hearken not" in such a way as to identify this refusal to listen to Yahweh with the sin and iniquity of the people.[63] Deuteronomy is much more positive in its approach and speaks more of the virtue of hearkening than of the sin of refusing to listen, but, though the equation is not made so clearly as in Jeremiah, the impression of the laws and particularly of the hortatory address before the laws is to this same effect.[64]

It is natural, in the light of this idea, that both writers should consider apostasy as one of the worst of sins, and in this they were joined by Zephaniah.

On the other hand, though there is a unity of concept from this period in these features, Jeremiah makes some important singular emphases which begin to mark the transition to new elements in the concept of sin. These are his insights into the individual and inward nature of sin. In the light of these insights he came to believe that the new covenant, which he considered necessary because of the crippling of the old covenant by the rebellion of the people as a whole, would

---

[62]Only Ezekiel (20 times) and II Isaiah (18) have any considerable usage and both are later.

[63]Cf. 3:25; 16:12; 40:3; 44:23; et al.

[64]Cf. 28:1-2, 15.

be with individual Israelites,[65] and that it would be inscribed in each individual heart rather than in a book or on stone tablets. This new covenant would be the basis of the national life which Yahweh desired to see expressed in his holy people.

The "union of morality and religion"[66] which was brought about by the work of the pre-exilic prophets was an important part of their contribution to the thought of the Old Testament. But it must not be considered apart from their total view of the "holiness" which Yahweh desired for and upheld in his people.

This union did make explicit what the word of Yahweh was to which they owed obedience as their side of the covenant. That word is seen to demand righteousness, justice, abandonment of oppression and exploitation, honesty, truth, kindness and assistance to the weak members of the covenant group. These found permanent expression in the Code of Deuteronomy. Moreover, this basic righteousness and justice

> became greater than the Israelites. They were tested by their ability to practice it.[67]

As far as we know, the first judgement uttered against

---

[65]The new covenant was to be with the house of Israel and of Judah but it is nonetheless primarily with individuals within the two nations.

[66]Cf. H. W. Robinson, Christian Doctrine of Man, pp. 49-52.

[67]Pedersen, Israel, II, 566.

a nation by a member of that nation, in the name of a God whose requirements are more than national customs, was that spoken by Amos.[68] The other prophets followed in his steps and applied a criterion which had passed beyond the nation itself to the actions of that nation. There are even some utterances which suggest that Yahweh was more interested in the fulfilment of his word than he was in the ultimate fate of his people. But that suggestion is always checked by the assertion that Yahweh's righteousness is Israelite righteousness and that, therefore, no other people could ever really fulfil it.

This is the "something more" than the "union of morality with religion" which finds expression in the writings of the pre-exilic prophets. The central concern with the apostasy of the people in worship of other gods and in acceptance of other patterns of cult and daily life is based on this belief that only true Israelitism could fulfil the covenant of Yahweh. The reassertion in prophet after prophet of some kind of future hope - a faithful remnant, a people who have returned to Yahweh, a newly covenanted people - is based on the certainty that Yahweh would find a way to gain expression for his holiness in his people. The great concern for the ethical uprightness of the people is

---

[68] Cf. Niebuhr, op. cit., I, 214-5, and note 5, where he contrasts Hebrew universalism with that of Plato and Aristotle.

an endeavour to make the people aware of their own responsibility to express this holiness of their God, and therefore of their own true nature, in order that he may fulfil his covenant with them and bring them into the glory he has purposed for them.

CHAPTER V

THE ATTITUDE OF THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS

Though Jeremiah ended his prophetic career during the years in which his nation and people twice were defeated and taken into captivity, most of his oracles were uttered before those events, and he only began to come to grips with the theological problems posed by this catastrophe in the life of the covenanted people.

Ezekiel, on the other hand, began his prophetic work in the years between the two defeats and continued into the years of the captivity itself. He was thus the first of Israel's writing prophets to face the necessity of a new interpretation of the nation's experience. The concept of sin was at the foundation of this new interpretation.

Until about thirty-five years ago Biblical scholars were wont to accept the integrity and the chronology of the Book of Ezekiel as it stands with little question. Even while other books were being analyzed in a most minute way, this book stood as the one example of the work of a single author whose oracles could be dated within a very narrow compass of possible error. During the last quarter century, however, this book, too, has been subjected to very close scrutiny with widely differing

results on every critical problem: unity, date, original form, and the character and the residence of the author(s). Apart from the work of a few scholars,[1] the major problem has been the relationship of chapters 40-48 to the rest of the book. Even those who defend the unity of the book have pointed out a double character in the author, or have indicated a shift in emphasis after the downfall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. If we accept either or both of these considerations as valid ones there is no compelling reason to insist on diversity of authorship in the main body of the book.

But it is important to remember that Ezekiel did prophesy in two different environments: first, in the city of Jerusalem to the inhabitants of that city from 592 to 586 B.C., in expectation of a second destruction of the city for its wickedness; and secondly, among the Exiles in Babylonia to their frustration and heart-break and pessimism from 586 to 571 B.C.

The oracles of the earlier period are largely devoted to powerful denunciation of the sins and shortcomings of the nation, and to prophecies of the punishment which was bound to come upon them for these iniquities.

---

[1] Notably G. Hölscher, Hesekiel. Der Dichter und das Buch, (BZAW; Giessen, 1924); S. Mowinckel, Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia, (Kristiania, 1914); both quoted in Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, pp. 586-7; and W. A. Irwin, Ezekiel, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1943), who deny the major part of the book to Jeremiah.

These oracles are very much in the same character as those of the prophets who went before him.[2]

"The land is full of blood, and the city full of wresting of judgement" (9:9), the people have been full of pride, they have sought careless ease, they have not sought to "strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (16:49). Indeed, they have resorted to soothsayers who, with their lies, have "cowed the heart of the righteous" and "strengthened the hand of the wicked" (13:20-23). There is dishonoring of father and mother, oppression of strangers, wronging of defenseless widows and orphans, shameless adultery, greedy exploitation of others (22:7, 11, 12). Even the prophets are guilty of falsehood in the same pursuit of gain (22:28). Though the actual terms for sin, iniquity, transgression and wickedness are not used to describe these acts in these particular chapters,[3] they are all used to describe the same acts in the eighteenth chapter, which some would place among the early prophecies, though many would place them after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586.[4] It is clear that

---

[2]A. B. Davidson, Ezekiel, pp. xliii ff, says: "In both parts his teaching agrees in many things with that of his predecessors, particularly Jeremiah.", yet in his citations he gives only one or two passages from chapters 33-39 and not one from 40-48.

[3]"Iniquity" is used in 9:9 and 16:49 and "wicked" in 13:22.

[4]Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 560.

Ezekiel was at one with all the earlier prophets in seeing such unethical practices amongst the Hebrews as sin and as one of the contributing factors, if not the sole reason, for the imminent destruction of the nation.

It is true, as some scholars have noted, that Ezekiel lists along with these ethical sins a number of ritual shortcomings in a way which seems to show a lack of discrimination between them.

> Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my Sabbaths. (22:8).
>
> Her priests have done violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and the common, neither have they taught difference between clean and unclean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths. (22:26).
>
> Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols and shed blood; (33:25).

Yet the occurrence of such is small in these chapters in comparison with the ethical concern. And even in some of these references there may be more concern over aspects of Canaanite and Babylonian worship than over purely ritual short-comings in the Hebrew cult.[5]

However, what constitutes both ethical and ritual failures as sin is that they represent a deliberate rebellion against the "statutes" of Yahweh which he had

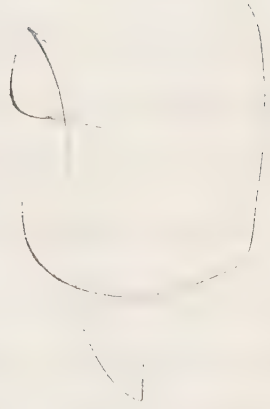
---

[5] Ibid., p. 550, lists idolatry, sacrifice of infants, and profanation of the Sabbaths, as ritual transgressions, though all of them were also denounced by the earlier prophets who had no particular interest in the ritual of the cult.

given them. This is because it was "My" sabbaths which they profaned, and "My" holy things which they despised, and "My" law which they forgot, and "My" people whom they oppressed and exploited. And they were "Yahweh's" sabbaths, and holy things, and laws, and people, because they were all a part of the covenant into which he had brought them.

Ezekiel does not say a great deal about the "covenant" between Israel and Yahweh, but what he does say is basic to his concept of sin. Unlike the other prophets before him, he does not seem to think of any period as being a "honeymoon" period when Israel was devoted to her God. Right from the very day that Yahweh found her in a dirty, naked, shameful condition, and entered into a covenant with her, she began to "play the harlot" with "everyone that passed by" (16:6,8,15). And when he brought her into the land of Canaan she immediately began to offer sacrifices at the Canaanite high-places (20:28). She was incapable of keeping the covenant.

Even when she made a political covenant with Babylonia under the approval of Yahweh she immediately violated it by seeking favours at the hand of Egypt (17: 16ff), and for this Ezekiel declares that Yahweh will destroy Jerusalem and Judah. He pictures many of her political intrigues (cf. 16:33; 23:5; et al.) as harlotry, which is his way of branding them as unfaithfulness to the covenant with Yahweh, and in each case he declares



appropriate punishment.

> I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, who hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant. (16:59).

In Ezekiel's eyes the worst feature of this forsaking of the covenant is the rampant idolatry which he sees on every side in the midst of the people. Again he pictures this sin as having been present in the covenant period itself; in Egypt Yahweh had asked his people to cast away their idols and detestable things and they had not done so (20:5-8). Even in the sacred temple enclosure in Jerusalem Ezekiel saw many evidences of idol-worship (cf. Ch. 8). He exhorts the people to "go no more astray from me, neither defile themselves any more with their transgressions" and he delivers a stinging indictment against the false prophets who have led the people into this iniquity of idolatry (cf. Ch. 14).[6]

In all this indictment of the nation for her sins and iniquities there is certainly implied a freedom of the nation to be faithful to the covenant if she will repent of her rebelliousness and obey. Yet there are some passages in Ezekiel's prophecies in which the idea of the utter sovereignty of God comes into conflict with this idea of the freedom of the nation to choose.

---

[6]It may be true, as Pfeiffer claims, that Ezekiel had little concrete evidence of much idolatry on which to base his polemic. Cf. "Images of Yahweh", op. cit., pp. 211ff. But the fact remains that in his concept of sin the idolatry which he (thinks he) sees is the worst manifestation of his people's sin.

If a prophet is enticed and speaks a word which leads the people astray, it is Yahweh who has enticed that prophet and Yahweh will destroy the prophet for speaking that word. Moreover, both the people who followed the prophet and the prophet who enticed them will bear their iniquity, even though Yahweh was the instigator of it (14:9-11). It is possible, of course, that the enticement of the prophet by Yahweh was in the nature of a temptation and that the free will of the prophet is not in question at all. In that case there is no conflict. But that does not seem to be the impression of the passage.

In another passage that alternative interpretation is hardly possible. For in 20:24-26 Ezekiel states that Yahweh, after giving the people good statutes which they rejected, gave them bad statutes and ordinances deliberately that they might follow them and place themselves in a position where he must punish them. Yahweh himself was the author of statutes and ordinances which were not good. W. F. Lofthouse seems to interpret this to mean that Yahweh sent both sets of statutes and ordinances and that the people, in their sin, chose the evil ones, thus bringing on themselves the punishment of their God.[7] It seems rather that, in his anger with his

---

[7] W. F. Lofthouse, Ezekiel (Century Bible; Edinburgh, T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1907), p. 171: "Sin causes a hopeless blurring of the distinction between right and wrong; this result, both the prophets and apostles assert, is not only allowed but sent by God."

people Yahweh deliberately led them deeper into sin in order that a drastic punishment might be in order. This does not rule out the freedom of the nation in the first place; it simply states that once the nation has begun the path to open rebellion Yahweh will take them further until he can destroy them.[8]

Ezekiel seems to have come to the conclusion, from his observance of ethical short-comings, ritual failures, apostasy and idolatry, and the complete rebelliousness of this "rebellious house",[9] that the sin of Israel is universal and complete. He cannot find a righteous man in the whole community.

> I sought for a man among them, that should make up a hedge, and stand in the breach before me for the land that I should not destroy it; but I found none. (22:30).

Therefore the sword of Yahweh is ready and sharpened for the destruction of the whole land, "cutting off from thee the righteous and the wicked" (21:3).[10] This imminent destruction of the land is pictured frequently through the early chapters of Ezekiel's book (cf. 4:1-5:4;

---

[8] A. B. Davidson, Ezekiel, p. xxxvi, tries to show that this line of thought is always concerned with a person or group which has first shown a disposition to sin and is therefore already worthy of destruction. Cf. also J.M.P. Smith, The Moral Life of the Hebrews, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1923), pp. 173-4.

[9] A phrase used frequently by Ezekiel, particularly in chapters 2, 3 and 12.

[10] This is an example of Ezekiel's inconsistency, for he goes on to say that he could not find any righteous man in Israel.

6:1-7, 11-14; 12:1ff; 14:12ff; et al.).

Despite this general indictment of the whole nation for its corporate sins, Ezekiel does recognize, even in this early period of his prophecy, the problem of the punishment of the righteous with the wicked. Perhaps in answer to questions regarding the transmitted merit of individual righteous to the whole community, he states emphatically that, inasmuch as the land has sinned so grievously, even though such eminently righteous persons as the renowned Noah, and Daniel and Job, might be in the midst of the people "they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness" (14:14). There is at least the admission that the righteous may deliver their own souls from the general destruction, though Ezekiel does not necessarily admit there are any righteous at this time.

Again at the time that a group of men were plotting to build houses and to urge others likewise, claiming that the city would keep them safe, Ezekiel delivered a strong oracle promising them that they and all the wickedness of Jerusalem would be destroyed, despite the walls of the city. But Ezekiel himself questioned God about the remnant of the people. The word he used (שְׁאֵרִית) is that which Isaiah used of the righteous group within the wicked. The answer to his questioning was that all will go into Exile but that the righteous (whom Yahweh will make righteous by

putting a new heart in them) will be restored to a new Jerusalem, while those who continue in their present abominations will bring destruction upon their own heads (11:14-21). In another passage in which Ezekiel asked a similar question about the "remnant" of Israel (9:3ff), Yahweh's answer indicated no mercy even for them, though the verses which preceded it gave evidence of a marked degree of individual merit. The visions of complete corporate destruction seem to gain the upper hand over the incipient concern for the fate of the individual righteous man.[11]

The oracles of the period of his activity in Babylonia amongst the exiles after 586 shows that Ezekiel was facing squarely into the problem which had bothered Habakkuk, the writers of Deuteronomy, and Jeremiah, and which had been implicitly a problem from the beginning of ethical prophecy in Israel with Amos - the problem of individual righteousness and sin.

The most important chapters which bear on this idea are 18, 33 and 3:16-21.

Chapter 18 introduces the problem with the same current proverb as Jeremiah had quoted:

---

[11]Unless chapters 18 and 3:16-21 are dated in the early period. They are usually dated with the later period, partly, it must be admitted, because they seem to fit the theology of Ezekiel's later period best, and partly because of their almost organic union with chapter 33. The oracles themselves are not precisely dated, though each has an introductory heading.

> The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. (18:2).

Apparently the exiles were quoting this proverb to explain their punishment in being exiled from their homeland. It was not for any sins of their own, they said, but for the sins of the past generations. Even Ezekiel had added fuel to that particular fire by his picture of the historic rebellion of the nation from the time of the Sinai covenant onward. But the destruction, which those arguments had tried to prove necessary, had come and the exiles needed now to be shown proof of the righteousness of Yahweh in his punishment of the people, in order that they might have faith in his righteous purposes for the future.

Ezekiel declares now that that proverb shall no more be quoted in Israel. It is no longer true.

> All souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine; <u>the soul that sinneth</u>, it shall die. (18:4).

This is a much more definitive statement of the principle of individual responsibility for sin than had yet been given in the Old Testament.

The rest of Chapter 18 is given to illustrations of how this principle will be applied to different situations, and Ezekiel is quite exhaustive in setting forth every conceivable situation. If a man has been righteous he will live (18:5-9). If his son is unrighteous he will die and his death will be the result

of his own sin (18:10-13). If this son has a son who, like his grandfather rather than like his father, is righteous he will live and have no responsibility for the sins of his father.

> Yet say ye: Why doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father with him? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father with him, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son with him; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (18:19-20).

Nowhere in scripture, nor in any writings, is there a more straightforward or explicit statement of individual responsibility than this. But there follows still more explanation of possible situations. If a wicked person turns from his wickedness to become righteous he will reap the rewards of his righteousness and will live. If a righteous person turns from his righteousness to wicked deeds he will be punished for his wickedness and die. (18:21-28).

Chapter 33 is a variation of this same theme but with the added problem of the responsibility of one who could and should have warned the wicked of his impending punishment if he did not repent. The lesson is much the same. If the watchman does not warn the wicked of his way and its consequences the wicked will die but the blame will also attach to the watchman. If the watchman

does warn the wicked and the wicked ignores the warning the wicked will die but no blame will attach to the watchman. The rest of the passage (to verse 20) is a statement of the nullification of iniquity by repentance and turning to righteousness, and the nullification of righteousness by apostasy and turning to wickedness. In this it repeats almost exactly the latter part of chapter 18.

Chapter 3:16-21 is a statement of the duties of the watchman over the wicked (cf. 3:16-18 and 33:8-9), and an additional note applying the same principle to warning the righteous not to depart from righteousness.

There is the ethical problem, apparent to us who have been accustomed to the principle of individual responsibility through many generations and who have found other problems within that concept, that the judgement of a man seems to depend on his righteousness or wickedness at the time of judgement. One day one way or the other might have found a different situation. Is a man's righteousness over a period of years to have no weight in contrast to a momentary wickedness at the time of judgement?[12]

In the first place the answer may well be that Ezekiel did well to formulate answers to as many concrete situations as he did, and that he could not have anticipated the finer shades of the problem. In the second

---

[12]Cf. Peake, Problem of Suffering, pp. 25ff.

place, however, he himself states that Yahweh's interest is not "pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (33:11). Every opportunity is given to the wicked to repent and be saved from death; it is assumed that the righteous will not be likely to slip from his righteousness into wickedness.

It has been noted that Ezekiel is not as clear on the inwardness of sin as Jeremiah was. It might well be concluded from some of his statements[13] that he defined righteousness and wickedness on the basis of the Deuteronomic law. Yet he does point to the new day of righteousness as a day when Yahweh would give Israel a new heart and a new spirit to enable them to walk after his statutes (36:26). And he refers to idolatry, the worst of their sins, as originating in their hearts:

> . . . these men have set up their idols in their mind [heart] , and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their faces. (14:3).

> . . . they rejected mine ordinances, and walked not in my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths - for their heart went after their idols. (20:16).[14]

The problem raised above with respect to the judgement of men who had been righteous for years on the basis of a momentary turning to wickedness becomes not so great

---

[13] Cf. 5:6-7; 11:20; 18:9,17,19,21; 20:11,14,16; et al.

[14] Cf. also 6:9; 11:19; 13:22; 22:14.

a problem if Ezekiel saw righteousness and wickedness as affairs of the heart. For he does declare that the wicked must repent and turn to righteousness to be saved alive, and there would be little likelihood that a man who was righteous in his heart, and not just in the outward deeds he did, would revert, even momentarily, to wickedness.[15]

It is interesting that in the oracles against the foreign nations and in the chapters, 34-39, which describe the almost supernatural restoration of the Exiles to their home land, there is very little reference to sin at all. The four Hebrew roots on which this study is based are used only seven times in the latter chapters and only four times in the former,[16] This is in contrast to over twenty-five passages in the first twenty-four chapters and the thirty-third, in many of which these words occur frequently. In the oracles against the foreign nations they identify the various nations - Phoenicians, Egyptians,[17] or Babylonians, - as sinful. In chapters 34-39 they are used of Edom's intention to

---

[15]Cf. Eichrodt, Theologie, I, 199-200, with reference to this chapter.

[16]In chapters 34-39 - 35:5; 36:31,33; 37:23; 39:23,24. In chapters 25-32 - 28:16,18; 29:16; 31:11; 32:27.

[17]Israel's sin with respect to Egypt is her dependence upon that nation instead of upon Yahweh; but Egypt is also considered sinful.

take over the land of Judah, and to the idolatry and the abominations of the Israelites which Ezekiel saw as a major reason for Yahweh's punishment of them. In each case sin is that which is foreign to the proper nature of Israel. Even the temple had become so polluted with what was foreign to Yahweh's nature that he caused it to be destroyed after his "glory" had departed from it. In this way the destruction of the temple could not be counted a defeat or dishonor of Yahweh for it was only its foreignness, its non-Yahwistic nature which was destroyed, and that at the instigation of Yahweh himself. In like manner the people of Yahweh must be purged of their uncleanness before Yahweh can restore them to the new life in Palestine, and that restoration is accompanied by a great battle against the forces of the foreign nations, represented by Gog of Magog, in which Yahweh will be victorious.

> My holy name will I make known in the midst of my people Israel; neither will I suffer My name to be profaned any more; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. (Ezek. 39:7).

The last nine chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy[18] are devoted to a description of the order of life to be lived in this new purged nation of Yahweh. Ezekiel had had this restoration in mind in earlier prophecies. In

---

[18] I accept the view that chapters 40-48 are the work of Ezekiel in the period after the second destruction of Jerusalem, i.e. ca. 585-571 B.C.

16:60, after declaring that God had little alternative but to break his covenant with them as they had broken it with him, he goes on to declare that God will nevertheless establish an ever-lasting covenant with his people. In 11:14ff., in answer to Ezekiel's own query as to the fate of the remnant of the people, God had said:

> I will even gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come hither and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. (11:17-18).

It is this condition of complete freedom from the "detestable things" and "abominations" which characterized foreign worship which the regulations for the restored community were designed to assure. The program of 40-48 was to keep the new community from defiling their true nature and thus offending against the holiness of Yahweh.

Yet Ezekiel was a realist to this extent that he knew complete freedom from defilement, both ethical and ritual, would be beyond attainment. Therefore, though the ordinary sacrifices of the temple cult, as we have seen, were thought to strengthen and even to restore community with Yahweh, he added to them sacrifices specifically for sin. Sin-offerings appear in the Old Testament first in chapters 40-48 of Ezekiel.[19]

---

[19] Cf. 40:39; 42:13; 43:19-25; 44:27; 45:17-25; 46:19-20.

They are to be offered for the sins which cause impurity to the temple. They are even primarily concerned with the uncleanness of parts of the temple itself. 45:19 describes how the priest sprinkles the blood of the sin-offering on the door-posts and corners of the altars and posts of the inner gates. This is to be done on the first day of the first and of the seventh months,[20] "for every one that erreth and for him that is simple; so shall ye make atonement for the house" (45:20).[21]

On all the regular festivals of the Hebrew year the prince must offer a sin-offering for himself and for all the people (45:22-24). The same prince is exhorted earlier to "remove violence and spoil and execute judgement and justice" and "to take away your exactions from my people" (45:9ff.). Though there is no necessary connection between this and the sin-offerings which he is commanded to offer, and we are told specifically that the sacrifices are to "make atonement for the house" rather than for his own moral shortcomings, we are not either told what makes the "house" unclean. It may well be that Ezekiel is preserving here an ancient ritual for

---

[20]Following the reading of the LXX which has "on the first day of the month and on the seventh day of the month".

[21]Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 583, regards the phrase, "him that erreth and that is simple" as a scribal gloss describing the author of the passage just preceding.

the warding off of demons or spirits, but it may also be that he has read into that ritual more than was originally there. It may very probably be that what makes the "house" unclean is anything which is foreign to the nature of Yahweh and His holy people and Ezekiel has given ample evidence that this involves ethical as well as ritual matters.

The uncleanness of the priests, for which they must offer a sin-offering, is defined clearly: it is having become contaminated through contact with a corpse, even of a very close relative (44:27). In this case the "sin" retains something of the old "mana" concept.

Certainly in cases specifically described, the sin-offering has reference to a sort of material defilement more often than to moral shortcomings. This is shown again in the use of the term "iniquity". It is used (43:10) of the defilement of the temple area by the proximity of the corpses of the kings to that area, or perhaps of the foreign custom of worship of the dead. It is used also of the idolatrous ministrations of the Levitical priests before the exile which were the cause of their debasement to menial service in Ezekiel's temple. By thus associating themselves with non-Israelite worship they had rendered themselves unholy and unclean and therefore iniquitous.

Ezekiel's contribution to the concept of sin was two-fold. First he put a new emphasis upon individual

responsibility for sin. Secondly he evidenced a new concern for the prevention of profanation of Yahweh's holiness and in this his emphasis lay upon the material features of uncleanness. The sin-offering, which he introduced, seems to have been particularly concerned with removing this material uncleanness from the people and from the temple.

The pre-exilic prophets had preached their indictment of the sins of Israel largely to deaf ears. The people were not, as a whole, prepared to admit that they had been sinful, or that Yahweh was displeased with them. Even the fate of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. had apparently not impressed Judah with her similar danger from the anger of her God. The great catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem twice in a single generation, the deportation of the leaders of the community, and the experience of the Exile, was a tremendous argument post facto of the truth of the preachings of these spokesmen of God. There arose a strong sense of sin, both national and individual, which found its expression first in the provision of Ezekiel's legislation for a special sin-offering, then in the Priestly legislation with its intensification of the expiatory cult, and also in the personal utterances of the Psalmists.

The prophet to whom, for want of a better name, we refer as the Second Isaiah, uttered his oracles to the exiles after an experience of nearly fifty years of

captivity and separation from the land of expectation. He had little to say by way of definition of the sin of his people or of the other nations, but he recognized its existence and took it almost for granted that it was the cause of the anger of Yahweh which sent his people into exile.

Almost entirely missing is the familiar denunciation of the sins of injustice or oppression or immoral behaviour. There are some passages which might suggest that he was concerned with this, but even they are so general that they hardly constitute any kind of definition. Thus the role of the Servant in 42:1-4 was to "make right [מִשְׁפָּט] to go forth to the nations" and "to set right in the earth". The "right" here intended seems to mean all of true religion,[22] i.e. true Israelite religion as commanded by Yahweh and extended to all nations. The denunciation of Babylon for her security in her wickedness (47:10-11) is taken by Skinner to be for her tyranny[23] and by Niebuhr for her self-centred attitude which denied the rights and existence of others and of any higher court of judgement,[24] but the general

---

[22]Cf. R. Levy, Deutero-Isaiah, (London, Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 144, and G. W. Wade, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, (Westminster Commentaries; London, Methuen, 1911), pp. 268-9.

[23]J. Skinner, Isaiah XL-LXVI, (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge, University Press, 1909), p. 76.

[24]Niebuhr, op. cit., I, 204, note 3.

context both before and after these verses seems to require a definition of wickedness in terms of divination through stars and magic.[25]

"Righteousness" (צְדָקָה), which has an ethical connotation in the earlier prophets, almost regularly in these chapters means the upholding of his people by Yahweh in victory or in redemption from their captivity.

> I will bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off,
> And my salvation shall not tarry. (46:13)[26]

There are a number of passages which define sin in terms of disobedience.

> Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers?
> Did not the Lord? He against whom we have sinned,
> And in whose ways they would not walk,
> Neither were they obedient to his law. [27]

But this disobedience may be more than just ethical misbehaviour, a refusal to embody in their corporate life the nature which Yahweh expected and demanded of them.

However, whatever the manner of the sins of Israel, Second Isaiah considers them to have been the real reason for Yahweh's punishment of the nation in this period of exile. Out of the ten passages[28] in

---

[25] Cf. Levy, op. cit., and Rade, op. cit., notes on this verse.

[26] Cf. also 45:8, 22-23; 54:14; et al.. Cf. Skinner, Isaiah XL-LXVI, Appendix, Note II, pp. 338-342.

[27] Cf. also 48:18; 50:10; 55:3.

[28] 40:2; 42:24; 43:24-28; 44:22; 46:8; 48:8, 18; 50:1; 52:13-53:12; 55:7.

which he uses any of the four basic Hebrew words for sin, four of them state this fact clearly.

> proclaim unto her,
> That her time of service is accomplished,
> That her guilt [עון] is paid off;
> That she hath received of the Lord's hand
> Double for all her sins. (40:2).

> Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to
> the robbers?
> Did not the Lord? He against whom we have sinned.
> (42:24a).

> Thy first father sinned,
> And thine intercessors have transgressed against
> me,
> Therfore I have profaned the princes of the
> sanctuary,
> And I have given Jacob to condemnation,
> And Israel to reviling. (43:27-28).

These all stand near the beginning of his prophetic oracles and they are the only specific references to sin in these first four chapters. The fourth reference of this nature is in chapter 50:

> Behold for your iniquities were ye sold,
> And for your transgressions was your mother
> put away. (50:1b).

None of them defines the nature of their sins; all of them take it for granted that the nature of Israel's sin will be clear to his hearers. One might expect that it would be defined in terms of the covenant, since both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had made use of that concept in defining sin. And II Isaiah does make use of this concept though he seems to go back beyond the Sinaitic covenant to Yahweh's covenant with Israel from the beginning of his world. He assures the people that Yahweh's covenant

of peace will never be removed (54:10). The verse preceding refers to the Noachic covenant with mankind after the flood. Israel is also assured that she is to be the sign of a covenant of Yahweh with all the nations of the world, but there is nothing to indicate that this is a replacement of an earlier covenant now superseded. There is abundant reference to Yahweh's choice of Israel to be his people; they were "called", "chosen", "created", "formed" or "made" for him from their very birth as a people, but this seems to refer to the call of Abraham,[29] or simply to Yahweh's purposes from creation onward, as easily as to a Sinaitic covenant. The sin of Israel in relation to the covenant is her refusal to pattern herself after the nature Yahweh intended for her. She was "created for my glory" but forgot her purpose (43:7; 44:21).

The emphasis in II Isaiah is on the forgiveness by Yahweh of his people's sins rather than on indictment of those sins.

> For the Lord hath comforted his people,
> And hath compassion upon his afflicted. (49:13).
>
> Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
> Saith your God.
> Bid Jerusalem take heart and proclaim unto her,
> That her time of service is accomplished. (40:1-2a).

Yahweh is a forgiving God who, despite their sins and iniquities, will "blot out" their transgressions and

---

[29]Cf. Skinner, Isaiah XL-LXVI, p. xxxi.

"not remember" their sins (43:25; 44:22).

It is perhaps significant that these two words: "to blot out" (מָחָה) and "to remember not" (לֹא זָכַר), are only infrequently used of the sins of the Israelites. In some of these occurrences they are used only to assure Israel that her sins and iniquities will not be blotted out and will surely be remembered. Only in four passages is there assurance that their sins will be blotted out[30] and only in four that they will be remembered no more.[31] Of these eight references three are in Second Isaiah and only one is earlier than his prophecy. That one is in the "New Covenant" passage of Jeremiah in 31:31-34, which has much in common with the general thought of this prophet.

This is thus a new idea in Israel. Before this it was believed that Yahweh might "lift up" the sins of a person or group, but that he did not forget them; he could reimpose them on a later generation, or he could "bear" them himself. But the sin had to be borne by someone. In the prophetic literature earlier than this there was constant call to repentance but never any assurance that the sins would be wiped out or forgotten. But it is just this emphasis upon forgiveness rather than indictment which is characteristic of this prophet.

---

[30] Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Psa. 51:1, 9.

[31] Jer. 31:34; Isa. 43:25; Psa. 25:7; 79:8.

The one sin which is mentioned and against which Israel is warned is idolatry and the worship of foreign gods. For the most part the idolatry which is derided is that of the Babylonians amongst whom the Hebrews are in exile (cf. esp. 40:18-20; 44:9-20; 46.). Set over against this foolish worship is the great fact of the God of Israel, who is the creator and controller of the universe (40:12-31; 42:5; 45:6-10,12; et al.), and who is therefore able to announce the course of events before they happen (cf. 41:21ff; 42:9; 43:9ff; 44:7ff; et al.). But there are suggestions that some even among the Israelites are prone to compare Yahweh with the idols of Babylon (cf. 40:18-20). In 42:17 all who trust in images, without special restriction to foreign nations, are assured that their trust will leave them embarrassed, and in 44:22 and 46:8 there is a reminder to the Israelites of their own sins and transgressions following immediately after a passage showing the folly of idol-worship, as though that were at least in part their sin. In 48:5 the prophet states that Yahweh deliberately declared things before they happened "Lest thou shouldest say, 'Mine idol hath done them, And my graven image and my molten image hath commanded them'". But there is none of the polemic against whole-hearted apostasy from Yahweh worship to the worship of foreign deities and idols.

Though Second Isaiah considered the idolatry of

the nations as folly and the tendency of some Israelites to practice it as sin, there is a new wideness in his concept of sin which included the foreign nations and which recognized the purpose of Yahweh as eventually including them in his covenant. Yahweh's desire for the nations is thus not alone their humiliation for their sins but their salvation as well. To this end Israel has a mission on Yahweh's behalf to those very nations: to be a light to them (51:4), to establish the right amongst them (42:1-4), to be a covenant with them (42:6; 49:8; 55:3), and so on. But even beyond this role of teaching and witness, Second Isaiah conceives of Israel's exilic suffering as being, not only the outcome of her own sins, but vicarious expiation for the sins of all the foreign nations as well.[32] The knowledge on the part of these nations that Israel has suffered thus for their sins will lead them to confess their sins and (presumably) to acknowledge Yahweh as the true God and accept his salvation of them. The prophet represents the nations, shocked at the horrible visage and terrible suffering of Israel, as saying:

> He was wounded for our transgressions,
> He was crushed for our iniquities:

---

[32]This idea is actually only found in the fourth "Servant Song" so that, if these be considered spurious, it can hardly be considered a part of II Isaiah's teaching. I consider these songs a part of the whole book of this prophet and believe the servant is Israel. For the arguments in favor of this view, cf. Feuke, Problem of Suffering, pp. 181ff.

The chastisement of our welfare was upon him,[33]
And with his stripes we were healed.
. . . . . .
And the Lord hath made to light on him
The iniquity of us all. (53:5-6).

For he was cut off out of the land of the living,
For the transgression of my people to whom the
stroke was due. (53:8).

Because he bared his soul unto death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet he bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.
(53:12).

Wade thinks that the prophet may have been led to this solution of Israel's suffering by the increasing emphasis during the Exile placed upon sacrifices of expiation, that he extended the substitutionary idea involved in sacrifice of animals for the sins of a person to the sacrifice of Israel for the sins of the Gentiles.[34] I think this highly improbable for two reasons. First, the expiatory nature of sacrifice for sins was negligible in pre-exilic practice and had only begun to be a factor, and then in theory only, in the idealized cult of Ezekiel. It was not until the Priestly Code had worked this idea into the regular cult of Israel that it would be a strong current in the

---

[33] The word "welfare" in this line is the Hebrew שלום, which we have seen earlier to represent the perfect relationship between God and man, or man and man, in a covenant.

[34] Wade, Book of the Prophet Isaiah, p. lxv. Pfeiffer also uses the term "sacrifice" for Israel's suffering here but does not suggest a connection with the sacrificial system. Cf. Introduction, p. 478.

thoughts of the people. Second Isaiah would hardly have used an analogy which was as yet largely unfamiliar. Second, the analogy breaks down at too many points to be valid. It would almost necessarily suggest to his listeners or readers that the role of Israel was completed when the sacrifice was made, whereas the prophet, even in this very passage, points forward to a vindication of his people and to a resurrection from death in captivity to a glorious future in Palestine.[35] The terms "wounded", "oppressed", "despised", "diseases", "grave with the wicked", "tomb with the rich", and so on, would be entirely out of place in such an analogy. The only possible point of contact is in 53:7b: "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter".

On the other hand it was not an unusual experience of the people that a prophet, chosen by Yahweh to speak his word, suffered martyrdom and rejection at the hands of those to whom he had been sent by Yahweh. This might more naturally have been the analogy in the mind of the prophet and of his hearers. The nation was admittedly sinful at many points and the exile and destruction of the capital of the nation were punishment for those sins. But Israel was still the chosen holy people of Yahweh and, though he punished her, he had not

---

[35]The last few verses of the chapter are admittedly difficult to read with certainty but the sense is clear.

utterly forsaken her. Her suffering was a part of her witness for the salvation of the nations. They would recognize in her sufferings the punishment of their own sins and be brought into the covenant of her God. Then she herself would be raised from her grave amongst the wicked and brought triumphantly back to Jerusalem to a glorious kingdom.[36] It was an entirely new concept of Israel's suffering for her sins and was never received into the theology of Rabbinism nor ever recaptured in later literature of the Old Testament.[37]

Thus II Isaiah presupposes most of what the earlier prophets had preached and adds to it a particular message to the situation which his people faced.

The sins of Israel - their refusal to obey Yahweh's revealed word, their refusal to embody in their life the purposes which he had covenanted with them to fulfil - were the cause of their exile from their own land. Yet this does not mean that Yahweh's purposes were paralyzed. His faithfulness to the covenant, i.e. his righteousness, would be made manifest in his restoration of his people to their own proper land in glory and honor. Moreover it would be made manifest, was already made mani-

---

[36]For an exposition of this point of view, cf. Peake, Problem of Suffering, pp. 59-64.

[37]Levy, op. cit., p. 23, quotes considerable Rabbinic literature to show how Judaism minimized the mission of Israel in these chapters and emphasized the comfort of them.

fest, in his unique holiness and power. He proved that the gods of the nations were nothingness and falsehood, and that he alone had power to fulfil his purposes. This gave the covenant of Yahweh universal implications and their particular place in it was to witness to all nations that particular character which Yahweh required of his holy people. When the nations beheld that, and realized that the sufferings of Israel were for their sins as much as for her own, they would respond and be brought within the covenant of Yahweh. But this could happen only when they saw and accepted the pattern of life which was Yahweh's demand, i.e. which was Israelite. Their sin, and Israel's, in the last analysis, was their failure to maintain this purity of life which Yahweh demanded.

Ezekiel had represented three aspects of the holiness of Yahweh and of his people. The first was that which came to him from his predecessors in the prophetic line, the demand of justice and righteousness. This he had developed toward individualism of responsibility for ethical behaviour and thus had prepared the way for personal religion. The second was the message he preached to the downcast exiles, that Yahweh would vindicate his covenanted people by giving them a new spirit, a new strength and unity, and by returning them in glory to Jerusalem. The third was the program he drew up to preserve the dwelling-place of Yahweh in their midst free

from any contagion of sin which might spread from them to it, so that he might be able to continue to dwell in their midst and not be forced to withdraw as he had been because of their sinfulness prior to the exile. These three aspects of the sinfulness of Israel are found in later literature, sometimes together, sometimes with emphasis on one or another of them, sometimes only one of them with the others forgotten or excluded. II Isaiah emphasized the great power of Yahweh to vindicate his people and to bring them back to their former glory, and promised his people forgiveness for their sins. Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, Malachi and III Isaiah represent all aspects, though none with great vigor.

The glorious return of the Jews from Babylonian exile after the conquest of the empire by Cyrus did not materialize as Second Isaiah had so grandly prefigured it. The actual history of the return is uncertain and of no particular moment in this study. But the next writers in the Old Testament were Haggai and Zechariah who were a part of the small returned community some twenty or thirty years after the release, and the picture they reflect is not a glorious one. There seems to have been little enthusiasm for the task either of rebuilding the temple to the glory of Yahweh or of re-capturing anything of the old zeal for the establishment of a great nation.

Haggai's chief concern was to get the temple rebuilt so that a valid cult could once more be instituded. The one weakness which he pointed to in his people was that they were unclean and that therefore their sacrifices were ineffective. Only the rebuilding of the temple could remedy this situation (cf. 2:10-19). Since uncleanness was contagious the offering of these unholy sacrifices made the whole nation unclean.

None of the four Hebrew terms we have been studying are once used by Haggai, and this idea of sin as uncleanness seems to be his only concept. The idea seems to have been taken by the people as a motive, for the rebuilding was at least begun.[38]

Zechariah, whose authentic utterances are confined to chapters 1-8 of the book which bears his name, was active at the same time as Haggai. Like Haggai he urged the rebuilding of the temple (cf. 1:16; 4:9). He seems also, however, to have put considerable hope in the destruction of the nations which had persecuted Israel (2:1-4) and particularly in the crowning of a Jewish Messianic king (6:9-15).[39]

---

[38]It is this idea, more than the encouragement of Haggai's final prophecy expressing hope in the Messianic crowning of Zerubbabel, which stirred the people to rebuild.

[39]This passage is corrupt as it stands but the Messianic hope is quite clear. Cf. G. A. Smith, Book of the Twelve, II, 308-9.

Zechariah's faith was not only political. He believed that wickedness must be removed out of the midst of Israel and seems to have equated that wickedness with theft and false oaths (5:3-11). Even the priesthood was in need of the cleansing of its iniquity[40] (3:4,9). It is perhaps not reading too much into the passage to relate this iniquity to the following charge to "walk in My ways, . . . keep My charge, . . . and judge My house, . . . and also keep My courts" (3:7), for it seems at least to be a permissible interpretation. Certainly Zechariah did desire for his people the justice and righteousness which the eighth century prophets had exhorted:

> Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbors; execute the judgement of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord. (8:16-17).[41]

He even appealed to the teaching of those early prophets and to the experience of those who refused to hear their words as the basis for the divine authority of his own words (1:2-6) and had much there to say about the

---

[40] R. H. Kennett, "Zechariah", A. S. Peake, Commentary on the Bible, (London, T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1924), p. 377a, claims that "iniquity" here means only the charge of iniquity by his accuser, "for, according to Hebrew idiom, 'iniquity' or 'guilt' rested upon every accused person until he was acquitted." But this would still only mean that Zechariah considered the priesthood in need of clearance of its iniquity.

[41] Cf. also 7:8-14.

"evil ways" of their fathers, though he did not use any of our terms in that specific connection. He seems to have been torn between a belief in the possibilities of a sinless people and a belief in the divine intervention of Israel's God to bring in his own kingdom regardless of his people's loyalty.

About sixty years later than Haggai and Zechariah (i.e. ca. 460 B.C.) Obadiah and the writer of the book of Malachi uttered their prophetic oracles. Obadiah has little importance for our study. He never used any of our four words for sin and his concern was only for the denunciation of Edom for her "pride" (1:3ff) and for her "violence done to [her] brother Jacob" (1:10ff). He declared neither of them to be sin though the latter would certainly be considered a breach of the brotherly covenant (cf. Amos 1:9ff and 11ff).

Malachi's prophecy is more nearly related to that of Haggai and Zechariah. He spoke nearly fifty years later but was concerned with the same community as they and with abuses arising out of the same general situation. The temple had now been rebuilt but the people were not at all zealous in its service.

In an early passage (1:4) he also condemned Edom, as Obadiah did, for her "wickedness" in her desires upon the helpless territory of Israel. In a later passage he delivered an oracle which is reminiscent of the earlier prophets and of Deuteronomy:

I will come near to you in judgement;
And I will be a swift witness
Against the sorcerers, and against the
adulterers,
And against false swearers;
And against those that oppress the hireling
in his wages,
The widow and the fatherless,
And that turn aside the stranger from his right,
And fear not me,
Saith the Lord of hosts. (3:5).

But the major concern of this prophet was with the improper ministrations of the cult on the part of both people and priests. The people brought blemished animals for sacrifice and said: "It is no evil" (1:8); they robbed God of his rightful offerings and said: "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" (3:8-9). The priests were covenanted with Yahweh to teach the Law and to turn men away from "iniquity", but they had broken that covenant and had caused the people to stumble (2:6-8). The day of judgement would be a day of refining and the priests would then be purified so that they could again offer offerings in righteousness:

Then shall the offering of Judah and
Jerusalem
Be pleasant unto the Lord,
As in the days of old,
And as in ancient years. (3:4).

Malachi thus condemned sorcery, adultery, oppression of the weak, sacrifice of blemished animals, improper teaching of the law, in short, anything in the activity of the people which was contrary to life as Yahweh had willed it and as Israel had lived it in the strongest and best days of her life.

Chapters 56-66 of Isaiah are variously considered a part of the work of II Isaiah,[42] the work of a single author of the period of Malachi and Obadiah,[43] or the work of a number of authors in the general period from the Persian to the Hellenistic periods.[44] In any case the general period is considered to be approximately the same, that is in this period near the turn of the fifth century B.C.

A survey of the use of the four Hebrew roots which have formed the basis of this study show that the writer was concerned with ethical and moral shortcomings as well as with ritual sins and the sin of apostasy, particularly the worship of the gods of Canaan and the use of Canaanite ritual practices (cf. 57:3-8).

The invective against unIsraelite practices in the Hebrew cult is manifested at some length in chapter 57:

> Against whom do ye sport yourselves?
> Against whom make ye a wide mouth,
> And draw out the tongue?
> Are ye not children of transgression,
> A seed of falsehood,
> Ye that inflame yourselves among the terebinths,

---

[42]Cf. C. C. Torrey, The Second Isaiah, (New York, Scribner's, 1928).

[43]Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 480. He believes III Isaiah was written to interpret II Isaiah to a later generation.

[44]Cf. W. L. Wardle, "Isaiah XL-LXVI", A.S. Peake, Commentary, p. 461.

Under every leafy tree;
That slay your children in the valleys
. . . . . .
Upon a high and lofty mountain
Hast thou set thy bed;
Thither thou also wentest up
To offer sacrifice.
And behind the doors and the posts
Hast thou set up thy symbol. (57:4-8).

It is brought in again near the end of the prophecy:

Yea I will requite in their bosom
Your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together,
Saith the Lord,
That have offered upon the mountains,
And blasphemed me upon the hills;
Therefore I will first measure their wage into their bosom. (65:6b-7).

The iniquity of the people's covetousness was part of the reason for the exile (57:17). The people protested to God that they had fasted, yet he had refused to hear them. But he replied that the fast he desired was not that of a bowed head and a devotion in sackcloth and ashes, but a fast of loosing the bonds of wickedness, letting the oppressed go free, giving bread to the hungry, and the housing of outcasts (58:1-7). Chapter 59 continues this same ethical interest, especially crying out for justice:

For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee,
And our sins testify against us;
For our transgressions are present to us,
And as for our iniquities we know them:
Transgressing and denying the Lord,
And turning away from following our God,
Speaking oppression and perverseness,
Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.
And justice is turned away backward,
And righteousness standeth afar off;
For truth hath stumbled in the broad place,

And uprightness cannot enter.
And truth is lacking,
And he that departeth from evil maketh
himself a prey.
And the Lord saw it and it displeased him
That there was no justice. (59:12-15).

All other references are so general that they carry no more content than disobedience (cf. 64:5,6,8) or rebellion (66:24).

There is a feature of this aspect of the concept of sin in these chapters which deserves consideration since it is a general undercurrent to most of the concepts of sin we have studied but rarely comes to the surface as clearly as here. That is the instability of the life of iniquity or sin. The Deuteronomic attitude, as we have seen, could almost be formulated in the sentence: "The righteous prosper and the wicked suffer". But this was attributed to the judgment of God in each case. Here this is the identification of the life of iniquity and wickedness with that which is weak and destined to fail.

But your iniquities have separated
Between you and your God,
And your sins have hid his face from you,
That he will not hear.
. . . . . .
Your lips have spoken lies,
Your tongue muttereth wickedness.
None sueth in righteousness,
And none pleadeth in truth;
They trust in vanity, and speak lies,
They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.
(59:3-4).

But the wicked are like the troubled sea;
For it cannot rest,

And its waters cast up mire and dirt.
There is no peace [שָׁלוֹם],
Saith my God concerning the wicked. (57:20-21).

The reason for this identification of the wicked with the weak and unstable is that the person needs the blessing of his God to maintain his life. If the spirit of God withdraws itself from the soul of the person the soul is weak in all its manifestations, even including material prosperity. The weak soul is filled with falsehood and the "false is the same as the powerless".[45] This is why idols were so regularly described as false. (Cf. Jer. 10:14; Isa. 44:20). It is also why in the first passage above wickedness is paralleled by lies, and iniquity by vanity, lies and mischief.[46] Likewise, if the blessing of God is withdrawn from a person there cannot be that right relationship which is the essence of the Hebrew term "shālōm". Hence the wicked are like the troubled sea, in continual turmoil and muddiness, because there is no "shālōm" to the wicked.

---

[45] Pedersen, Israel, I, 412.

[46] The Hebrew word for "iniquity" here is not עָוֹן but אָוֶן . Of this root Pedersen, Israel, I, 431, says: "Properly speaking it denotes strength, but gradually it has come to be used of the false strength, the magic power, and therefore it has all the characteristics of sin. It is the evil, hollow act (Isa. 1:13; 10:1), full of wickedness and hostility (Isa. 32:6; 59:9; et al.), that which pursues its spoil by crooked ways, with deceit and secret arts, or, briefly, that which is in reality vain and carried unhappiness in it (Num. 23: 21; Jer. 4:15; Amos 5:5). The false gods are 'awen (Isa. 66:3; Hos. 10:5,8).

These ideas are probably basic to almost all that is said of sin and iniquity and wickedness in every period of the Old Testament, though a different content of sin may be emphasized from period to period, as we have seen in studying the various writers.

Pfeiffer states that the author of these chapters fails to "discriminate . . . between ritual and moral transgressions".[47] Whether that is a failure or not, of course, depends on the basis of the definition of sin. Since the definition of sin almost throughout has been the failure to embody in the Israelite community the characteristics of a peculiarly Yahwistic people, and since a ritually pure cult is one of these characteristics in many of the writers this is hardly a failure.

The keeping of Sabbaths is particularly commended (56:2,6) and the eating of swine's flesh is condemned (66:17). Some of the other practices which Pfeiffer classes as ritual shortcomings are actually condemned rather because they are elements of the worship of foreign deities and involve apostasy (cf. 57:3-13; 65:1-7). Moreover the ritual is associated with ethical behaviour and is apparently condemned when it is not an aid to such (cf. 58:3-8).

However, these chapters do not seem to make a change in behaviour a prerequisite to the coming of the Kingdom of God but declare that he will intervene

---

[47] Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 481.

supernaturally to establish that kingdom anyway. Some passages do suggest that only the righteous will be saved (59:18-20; 65:1-12; 66:15-17). But others (57:16-19; 60-62) declare that Yahweh will save his whole people, and the chapters end with a picture of "all your brethren" being gathered out of the nations:

> For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. (66:22).

In such imaginative passages the victory of Yahweh overshadows the fact of Israel's sin or the necessity of repentance.

For a knowledge of the activity of Ezra and Nehemiah, generally placed in the period of these post-exilic prophets, we have to depend on the work of the Chronicler, and the ideas of this writer may have much to do with the concepts presented. But for their major contribution to the concept of sin we may accept his work as a valid presentation of their ideas.

Their concern was to maintain a complete separation between the community of Israel in Judah and the foreign peoples in the land of Canaan. The sin which they harp on over and over is the sin of "breaking faith and marrying foreign women of the peoples of the land" (cf. Ezra. 10:2; Neh. 13:23-27). They must be completely separated in order to maintain their distinctive Israelite life. That this distinctive life

is undermined in other ways is evident from the oppression of the weak by interest-taking and slave-purchasing. Nehemiah requires the wealthy to cease this practice too for the "thing is not good" and is only evidence that the people do not "walk in the fear of our God" (cf. Neh. 5:1-13).

The concept of sin in this period, then, is closely related to the idea in the exile that the distinctively Israelite life which Yahweh required of his covenant people could only be lived when the old centres of life were re-established. Haggai and Zechariah even hoped momentarily at least for the re-establishment of the monarchy in Zerubbabel. This was dashed. But post-exilic prophecy generally insisted on the re-establishment of the temple and of its cult. Haggai and Zechariah considered the life of the people sinful until the temple was at least begun. Malachi sought to purify the ministrations in the temple. III Isaiah saw the temple and its cult, properly linked with an ethical life which it should nourish, as a basis of the strength of the people. Ezra and Nehemiah made it a part of their program of reform.

But most of these prophets also felt that even such a society was not the end of Yahweh's purpose for them. They looked to him to lead them gloriously into a new society in which they would be purged of all their sinfulness, in which the continuing exiles would

be gathered to Jerusalem, in which the Gentile nations would flock to Jerusalem also as subordinate peoples in Yahweh's covenant. In this hope the sinfulness of Israel was somehow minimized in considering the sinfulness of the whole world and the future regeneration under the power of Yahweh.

CHAPTER VI

THE ATTITUDE OF THE APOCALYPTIC WRITERS

> "The Old Testament literature subsequent to the exile shows three lines along which the conception of sin was modified or developed, namely, the ritualism of the Law, the utilitarianism of Proverbs, and the piety of the Psalter".[1]

To these must be added the very important line of the apocalyptic writers, whose very minimization of the concept of sin marks a particular development in thought about it.

It is difficult to give any dates for Apocalyptic literature as a movement of thought in Hebrew culture. There were hints of it as early as Zephaniah[2] and both Ezekiel and Second Isaiah reflect its mood, if not all its characteristic marks. The passages of Old Testament literature which are generally considered apocalyptic are Isaiah 13-14; 24-27; Jeremiah 50-51; Zechariah 9-14; Joel and Daniel 7-12. In addition scattered portions of almost all the prophetic books of earlier times are considered to be apocalyptic additions by later editors. Even these specific

---

[1] H. W. Robinson, Christian Doctrine of Man, p.52.

[2] Cf. Reake, Problem of Suffering, p. 130.

passages range in dating from near the end of the exile to the Maccabean period in which the last of the Old Testament writings emerged.[3]

I have chosen to discuss this literature here for two reasons: first, because the dating in general covers such a wide range that it may be placed chronologically anywhere after the exile and nowhere with exactitude,[4] and, secondly, because apocalyptic literature is the successor to prophetic literature in the Old Testament and carries that line to its ultimate conclusion in the canon.

Apocalyptic literature was written in times of great national and personal stress and danger. Its purpose was to encourage faithfulness to the recognized precepts and forms of national religion in the hope that eventually, usually in the near future, God would intervene in the international situation which produced the stress and danger and would then exalt his own people as a nation and utterly destroy the nations which had

---

[3] Pfeiffer, Introduction, e.g. dates Isaiah 24-27 "later" than the fourth century B.C. (p. 441), Jeremiah 50-51, along with most of 46-51, "after 585", (p. 506), Zechariah 9-14 "in the third century" (p. 611), Joel "around 350 B.C." (p. 575), and Daniel "in 168-165 B.C." (p. 765). These dates would be generally acceptable to critical scholars at the present time.

[4] The outstanding Old Testament apocalypse (Daniel), of course, is accurately dated within two or three years (168-165 B.C.).

oppressed them.

It can readily be seen that there would not be the same reason for the denunciation of the people of the nation for their specific sins and shortcomings which had so characterized early prophecy. Raymond Calkins says of Joel that many of the ideas of the older prophets are to be found there: "calamities . . . the fruit of sin", "punishment . . . escaped only by repentance", and so on. Yet "the sins of Israel are not described, deplored and condemned".[5] Even the general impression that the calamities which had befallen the people were the result of Israel's sin is not easy to document from Joel or any other of these writings, with the exception of the ninth chapter of Daniel.[6]

The references to sins are general and universal rather than particular and national or individual:

> The earth[7] also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof;
> Because they have transgressed the laws,
> violated the statute,

---

[5] Calkins, The Modern Message of the Minor Prophets, p. 156.

[6] Many scholars deny this chapter to Daniel. J. Montgomery, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, (ICC; New York, Scribner's, 1927), p. 99, cites Von Gall, Marti and Charles as such. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 774, seems to take this point of view. Montgomery, himself, argues for the authenticity of the passage, cf. p. 96.

[7] Wade, Book of the Prophet Isaiah, p. 158, says: "This is the right rendering (and not "the land" of the margin) as appears from vv. 13, 21; cf. also 25:8; 26:9, 21".

Broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore hath a curse devoured the earth,
And they that dwell therein are found guilty.
(Isa. 24:5-6).

The earth reeleth to and fro like a drunken man,
And swayeth to and fro as a lodge;
And the transgression thereof is heavy upon it,
And it shall fall and not rise again. (Isa. 24:20).[8]

It is the general wickedness of the whole earth which is described and it is the complete destruction of the whole earth which is expected. It is true that Israel is involved in this general sinfulness of the earth, and, at least by Joel, is called to repentance in the remote hope that Yahweh may yet repent (2:13-14), but it is not for her sins alone that punishment will come upon her.

There is a far more frequent denunciation of the wickedness of the nations at whose hands Israel has been suffering than of her own wickedness. In the apocalyptic oracle of Isaiah 13-14 directed against Babylon, the writer declares that Yahweh will come to make the earth a desolation and "to destroy sinners out of it" (13:9). He will visit upon the wicked their iniquity and will "cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease" (13:11). Yahweh has broken the staff of the "wicked" (14:5). All these are directed against Babylonia particularly for her oppression of Israel and

---

[8]Cf. also Isa. 24:16; 26:10, 21.

Judah. Likewise the oracle against Babylon in Jeremiah (50-51) condemns that nation for her "sin against Yahweh" (50:14). Joel denounces the wickedness of the nations (4:13)and forecasts the destruction of Egypt and Edom for their "violence against the children of Judah" (4:19).

This tendency to identify the good with Israel and the wicked with the foreign nations, which began with Joel and continued until it became almost a regular feature of apocalyptic,[9] is partly a return to the national hope and partly, undoubtedly, the logical result of the identification in the later prophets of the worst nature of sin with idol-worship and complete apostasy.[10] Both of these denoted complete rebellion against Yahweh, the one true God, and were found in foreign cultures. Though the various apocalyptic books and passages do not give much space to idol-worship, they do give it a significant place in their definition of sin. The writer of Isaiah 24-27 states that "Jacob's" sin can only be expiated by the rooting out of such practices in her midst:

By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be expiated,

---

[9]Cf. S. R. Driver, The Books of Joel and Amos, (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge, University Press, 1907), p. 31.

[10]The externalization of sin which we shall see manifested particularly in the Wisdom literature and many of the Psalms (cf. Chapters VIII and IX), also contributed to this identification of the good with Israel, who had the Law, and the wickedness with the gentile nations, who did not.

> And this is all the fruit of taking away his sin:
> When he maketh all the stones of the altar as
> chalkstones that are beaten in pieces,
> So that the Asherim and the sun-images rise
> no more. (27:9).

Jeremiah 50-51 also ridicules idols as the trust of the Babylonians (50:2; 51:17-19; 51:47), and Zechariah 9-14 states that in the days to come Jerusalem will be purified by the cutting off of the names of idols out of the land so that they will not be remembered any more (13:1-2). A major part of the first six chapters of Daniel are devoted to encouraging, through the example of Daniel and his three friends, the complete refusal to bow down to any other god than Yahweh, even at the cost of life (cf. Dan. 3 & 6). "The portion of Jacob is not like these" (Jer. 51:9) and this is the reason that Israel will be saved in the final day of Yahweh, while the nations of the world will be utterly destroyed.

It is the power of Yahweh which is emphasized in these books - power to destroy the enemies of his people utterly and power to cleanse his people of their sins and to pardon them that they may be exalted to the glorious future which lies ahead. There are one or two passages which do seem to expect an individual judgement of sinners and righteous. Amos 9:9-10 says:

> For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the
> house of Israel among all the nations,
> Like as corn is sifted in a sieve,
> Yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.
> All the sinners of my people shall die by the
> sword,
> That say: "The evil shall not overtake nor confront
> us".

This judgement of individual sinners within the nation must come in some great battle in this earth and we are not told what will follow, unless verses 11ff are from the same writer and then it is the Messianic kingdom on this earth.[11] Daniel 12:1-3, on the other hand, speaks of an individual judgement of sinners and righteous which is partially, at any rate, to take place in a resurrected existence:

> And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to reproaches and everlasting abhorrence. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

The people of God who are living at the time of trouble will be delivered from it. But many of the righteous people of God will have died and many of the wicked who received no punishment have also died. They will be raised to stand judgement - the righteous to be destined for everlasting life, the wicked for everlasting punishment. The particularly righteous, who turned many to the true faith by their witness, will have a place of particular glory in the future life.[12] These contributions to the question of the fate of the "righteous" had

---

[11] E. A. Edghill, The Book of Amos, (Westminster Commentaries; 2nd ed.; London, Methuen, 1926), pp. 91ff.

[12] Montgomery, Daniel, pp. 470-2.

great influence on Judaism and Christianity. "From the time of the Maccabean struggle that belief [the doctrine of the resurrection and of individual reward and punishment] entered to become one of the few chief dogmas of Judaism."

However, for the most part, these apocalyptic books expected a purging or pardoning of the whole nation prior to a complete restoration (cf. Jer. 33:8; 36:3; 50:20; Zech. 13:1; Isa. 27:12-13; et al.). The interest of these writers turned away from the sins of the people of Israel[13] to the sufferings of Israel and the sins of the oppressive nations which surrounded Israel, and to the great and glorious future which would be Israel's when Yahweh at last intervened, purging Israel of all impurity and sin, destroying the wicked nations, and elevating his chosen people to their destiny.

---

[13] The four Hebrew roots basic to the concept of sin are used very sparingly in these chapters except in Daniel 9 (cf. footnote 6 in this chapter). חטא occurs only 7 times; עון occurs only 4 times; פשע occurs only twice, both in Daniel 9; עשׁק occurs only five times. None of these gives any clear content except one or two which indicate idolatry (cf. Isa. 27:9), and perhaps Isa. 26:21 which suggests murder.

In Daniel 9 חטא appears eight times, עון four times, פשע once, and עשׁק twice, a total of fifteen occurrences as against eighteen in all the other chapters of apocalyptic literature combined.

CHAPTER VII

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRIESTLY WRITERS

The message of the prophets from the eighth century to the exile was to the effect that if the Israelites failed to fulfil their covenant responsibility to Yahweh by manifesting in their corporate life the holiness which they had partaken when they became his people he would withdraw his supporting spirit and strength from them, leaving them at the mercy of enemy nations, or would even actively work for their punishment by bringing such nations against them.

This message was borne out in the destruction of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and, when the southern kingdom did not learn from this and return to Yahweh's characteristic way of life, in the destruction of the southern kingdom in 597 and 586 B.C. The fall of the north did not pose the same problem as that of the south since the particular place of abode of Yahweh from the time of David's kingdom onward was the sanctuary in Jerusalem. Yahweh could continue to dwell there even when he had withdrawn his upholding strength from the north because of its sinful disregard of his commands. But the fall of the south and the destruction of the

temple itself did pose a problem. Jeremiah, however, had warned the people against the feeling that Yahweh was somehow bound to his temple and that he could not allow it to be destroyed. In fact he had reminded them that at an earlier time Yahweh had allowed his sanctuary at Shiloh to be destroyed, had even destroyed it himself, because it had been defiled by the sin and wickedness of his people's activities and worship (cf. Jer. 7:3b-15). Likewise, Ezekiel reported a vision in which he saw the presence of Yahweh departing from the temple because it had become polluted with worship which was not acceptable to him and did not manifest his own peculiar nature (Ezek. 10:18). And, having departed from the temple and from his people, Yahweh could stand aside and watch the destruction of the temple and the punishment of his people. It became a triumph for Yahweh's holiness rather than a defeat to it.[1]

The great concern during the exilic and post-exilic period for the restoration and maintenance of the cult of the temple was occasioned by the recognition of the great sinfulness of the people and the desire to provide for the dwelling of Yahweh in the midst of the people despite their sinfulness. The pre-occupation with the meticulous and minute ritual which is manifested in the "Priestly" literature of this period is

---

[1]Cf. Pedersen, Israel, II, 596.

based on this acknowledgement that the ordinary life of the people cannot be free from sin and the insistence that, therefore, there must be provided a holy cult, separated from the ordinary life of the people with the greatest care, in the midst of which Yahweh might dwell without infringement upon his holiness.

Thus Ezekiel, after describing his vision of the restored temple, tells how the "glory of Yahweh" returned to the temple, and how Yahweh said to him:

> Son of man, this is the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever; and the house of Israel shall no more defile My holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their harlotries and by the carcasses of their kings in their high places; in their setting of their threshold by My threshold, and their door-post beside My door-post, and there was but the wall between Me and them; they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed; wherefore I have consumed them in Mine anger. Now let them put away their harlotry, and the carcasses of their kings, far from Me, and I will dwell in the midst of them forever.
> (Ezek. 43:7-9).

It is the concern to maintain the holiness of the people, to provide for the removal of any unholiness which did inevitably contaminate them, and to provide a cult for the worship of Yahweh which was sufficiently separated from the unholy to avoid defiling the holy name of Yahweh, which breathes through all the prescriptions of the Priestly literature.

The literature which is generally classed as

"Priestly" by critical scholarship is the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26), the Priestly Code (the rest of Leviticus and portions of Exodus and Numbers), and the historical literature found in the "P" sections of the Pentateuch, in Chronicles and in Ezra-Nehemiah.[2]

An examination of the use of our four Hebrew roots denoting "sin" in these portions of literature reveals a preponderance in favor of the root חטא. In the Holiness Code its use is fairly evenly balanced by the use of עון, which is consistent with the pattern in the prophetic literature.[3] But in the Priestly Code חטא outnumbers עון in the ratio of about eight to one, in Chronicles about two to one, and in Ezra-Nehemiah about three to one. This is due largely to the fact that in these sources that root is used to designate the "sin-offering" and "purification" in about half its occurrences, and the interest in that offering is great in these sources. In all this literature both פשע and שגה have just about disappeared.[4]

---

[2] In identifying particular passages as Priestly in Exodus and Numbers, I have followed Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, pp. 188-190, 250-256, and Driver, Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, pp. 22-32, 60-69.

[3] In Jeremiah, Hosea and II Isaiah they are used almost exactly equally, in I Isaiah with more variation but not in overbalance. Amos uses פשע more than the other roots because of his oft-repeated refrain.

[4] Not at all in H, twice each in P, three and five respectively in Chronicles, and once each in Ezra-Nehemiah, as against over 150 uses of חטא in P alone.

The addition of the "guilt-offerings" and "sin-offerings", or, if it be maintained that these existed before the exile,[b] the added importance of these, in the temple cult, is significant for an understanding of the whole import of the priestly concern for the ritual approach to Yahweh.

Ezekiel had required in Yahweh's name sin-offerings to "atone for" the temple and its various parts, in order that nothing unclean or sinful should adhere to the dwelling of Yahweh to defile his holiness. The priestly literature now required in Yahweh's name the same sin-offerings to "atone for" the uncleanness and sin of the people of Yahweh so that when they presented their sacrifices in his temple they might not defile his holiness.

It has been somewhat customary to think of this uncleanness and sin which must be atoned for, that is, which must be removed so that the people could approach Yahweh's dwelling and receive his blessings, as purely material and ritual. This is not so. There is evidence of the same concern for the sins against members of Yahweh's holy people in exploitation, oppression, defrauding, perverting the justice of the law courts as we have seen in Prophetic literature. This is perhaps

---

[b]Cf. G. B. Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, pp. 81-83, 77-91, 85, 95 and W.O.E. Oesterley, Sacrifices in Ancient Israel, pp. 219-220.

particularly true of the Holiness Code, but we must remember that this Code was incorporated into the Priestly Code very early in that code's history.[6]

The legal rights of the poor must be maintained in law suits (Lev. 19:15), the blood of one's neighbor must be avenged (19:16). Even

> Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor and not bear sin because of him . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (19:17-18).

Like the Deuteronomic Code[7] it forbade oppression of the poor, the retention of the wages of a laborer overnight, robbery, falsehood, and many other immoral practices familiar to us from the denunciations of the earlier prophets (19:13). It also forbade sexual intercourse with a betrothed maiden, or with a sister, aunt, or sister-in-law (19:22; 20:20).

The Priestly Code, itself, is concerned with some of these same immoral deeds. Defrauding one's neighbor is considered a sin for which expiation must be made to God as well as restitution to the offended neighbor (Num. 5:6-7; Lev. 5:20ff). Wifely infidelity is called iniquitous (Num. 5:12ff), though the test of fidelity leaves much to be desired from the point of view of modern jurisprudence.

---

[6]Cf. reference to Lev. 23:33ff as the Law of Moses in Neh. 8:14-18.

[7]Cf. Pfeiffer's discussion of the dependence of H on D, Introduction, p. 248.

These are all considered to be breaches of the covenant relationship with Yahweh. The Holiness Code warns that it was for such infidelity to the covenant that the people were delivered to their enemies; on the other hand it promises that fidelity to the covenant will bring the blessing and prosperity and peace which comes with Yahweh's supporting presence in their midst (cf. Lev. 26:3-39). Therefore the sin-offerings are now prescribed

> If any one shall sin through error, in any of the things which the Lord hath commanded not to be done, and shall do any one of them. (Lev. 4:2b,3,13,22,27).

Nonetheless, most of the cases mentioned for which sin-offerings were required were cases of material uncleanness which might have no ethical connection at all. If a man were the victim of various skin eruptions or of leprosy (Lev. 13:2-46), if he had emitted sexual emissions (Lev. 15:16-27), if a woman had given birth to a child (Lev. 12:1-8; where the period of uncleanness differs in the case of a boy or girl), if a person had touched the dead body of any unclean animal or the corpse of a man (5:2-6; 7:21; Num. 19:11-14), he or she had become unclean and must be purified. If men went to war, any who slew one of the enemy or who touched any of the slain bodies was unclean and required purification (Num. 31:19ff). In the case of a Nazirite who was specially holy within the covenanted

people, to be near anyone who died rendered him unclean and required a reconsecration "for that he sinned by reason of the dead" (Num. 6:11).

Purification in these cases was accomplished by means of a sin-offering. In the case of uncleanness through contact with the dead there was also a ritual of purification by sprinkling a special "water of sprinkling . . . a purification for sin" (Num. 19:9) upon the unclean person or object. That uncleanness is thus thought of as a sort of material contagion is shown by the statement that

> when a man dieth in a tent, every one that cometh into the tent, and every thing that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering close-bound upon it, is unclean. And whosoever in the open field toucheth one that is slain with a sword, or one that dieth of himself, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. (Num. 19:14-16).

Though in this particular case the purification is achieved by sprinkling with this specially prepared water, of which the chief ingredient was the ashes of a sacrificed red-heifer, in other similar cases of uncleanness the purification is accomplished by means of a sin-offering, so that uncleanness and sin are closely associated, if not identified.

Sin-offerings were also prescribed as a sort of precautionary measure if the people were about to approach the presence of Yahweh and were not sure that they were properly prepared for it (Lev. 9:2-22) or as

a regular feature of the festivals of the year (Num. 28: 15,22). In neither case was the offering for any specifically acknowledged sin but just to cover sins which might not otherwise be atoned for.

Sin-offerings were even required for the priests, particularly at the time of their consecration to the service of Yahweh. Aaron and his sons (Exod. 29:14; Lev. 8:1-17), the Levites (Num. 8:7-12), and the Nazirites (Num. 6:12ff), all were subject to sinfulness and required purification before they could come into Yahweh's presence. Even the altar had to be purified by sin-offerings yearly (Exod. 30:10), just as the Tabernacle of Moses had been consecrated with sin-offerings from each of the tribes of Israel (Num. 7) along with sacrifices of other kinds.

It is this material concept of sin, which sees it as something which adheres to material things like a stone altar, or which can be stopped from entering into a jar by means of a tight cover, and this purification particularly by means of a special water of sprinkling, which led Joh. Hempel to see "the rooting of the Israelite apprehension of sin in the magical thought of primitive religion".[8]

The ritual of the sin-offering, and of the burnt-offering which is also associated with the sin-

---

[8] Hempel, "Sunde und Offenbarung nach alt- und neutestamentlicher Anschauung", op. cit., pp. 166-168.

offering in the expiation of sin, also has elements which seem to identify the sin as a material contamination to be got rid of in a material way.

In the sin-offering for the whole congregation the elders placed their hands on the head of the sacrificial animal before it was slain (Lev. 4:15), in the sin-offering for the ruler or a common person or the priests the person or persons concerned did likewise (cf. Lev. 4:24,29; Exod. 29:15; Lev. 8:14). In the case of the consecration of the Levites they were considered a sacrifice on behalf of all the people and all the people place their hands on their heads (Num. 8:10) and then in the sin-offering for themselves they did likewise with the animals to be slain for them (Num. 8:12). In most cases, too, the carcass of the sacrificial animal was burned outside the sanctuary, unlike other burnt-offerings which were wholly consumed on the altar within the sanctuary (cf. Lev. 4:11; 4:21; Exod. 29:14; Lev. 8:17). The ritual either symbolized or realized the transference of the sins of the persons concerned to the sacrificial animal, whose blood was then poured out at the foot of the altar and whose body was burned outside the sanctuary as though to rid the sanctuary also of the sins transferred to it.

The ritual of the sin-offering on the Day of Atonement added the goat for Azazel which was sent away into the wilderness bearing the sins of the

congregation for the whole year. In this case there is no mention of laying hands upon either the bullock of sin-offering for Aaron or the goat of sin-offering for the people. But when the goat for Azazel was brought forward

> Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of an appointed man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land which is cut off; and he shall let go of the goat in the wilderness. (Lev. 16:21-22).

The ceremony for cleansing a leper retained a similar feature. There a living bird was dipped in the blood of a sacrificial bird and was released, the cleansed leper being sprinkled also with the blood of the sacrificial bird. In some way the living bird was thought to bear off the uncleanness of the leprosy when it flew free.[9] Zechariah reported a vision in which he saw "Wickedness" personified as a woman lifted up in a bushel measure by two other women and borne off to Babylonia, thus cleansing Israel of her wickedness.

Norman Snaith notes, without further comment, that all these illustrations of sin or uncleanness as a material contamination which is materially contagious are in the pre-eighth century or post-exilic literature of the Old Testament.[10] It is impossible to say

---

[9]Lev. 14:4-7; cf. Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, p. 316.

[10]Snaith, op. cit., p. 42.

whether the same ideas and rituals existed within the Hebrew cult during the pre-exilic monarchical period without finding expression in any of the literature, or whether they did not exist in Israel during that time. It does not greatly matter for our study for it is clear that sin-offerings did not play an important part in the pre-exilic temple cult. If they had it would become difficult to explain the absence of reference to them in the account of Solomon's dedication of the temple to Yahweh. For Solomon's prayer is filled with references to the sins which he anticipates amongst his people and for which he asks God's forgiveness in advance, but when he proceeds to the sacrifices, though peace-offerings and meal-offerings and burnt-offerings are all mentioned, sin-offerings are not referred to at all (I Ki. 8:63ff). On the other hand, in the Priestly source, the dedication of the Mosaic tabernacle (a parallel occasion) is attended by a host of sin-offerings (Num. 7).

It may be that the materialistic features of the Priestly concept of sin and the ritual for its removal were taken over from the materialistic features of the Babylonian cult during the exile. Or it may be that it was an adaptation of features of the pre-exilic cult which had never assumed much importance but were now seen to fit the needs of the new situation for which the Priestly writers were preparing a blue-print. Whatever may be its origin, and though it did exhibit

features which are reminiscent of some of the "magical" practices of primitive cults, it is true as Burrows states, that

> the ritual system of the Old Testament was . . . lifted out of the realm of magic by the priestly legislators and historians through the application of the covenant idea. All the rites of the cultic tradition were subsumed under the dominant idea that this was what God required . . . It was a means of being holy as God is holy. (Cf. Lev. 19:2).[11]

The whole history of the world and of Israel is rewritten by the Priestly writers to bring it all under this idea of the covenant.

To begin with, the whole universe is God's possession by right of creation. The culminating point was the creation of mankind to have dominion over all other elements of creation. Mankind was made "in the image of God" to fulfil the purposes of God for his created universe.

When God saw that mankind had "corrupted their way upon earth", he determined to destroy them, and saved only Noah and his family alive of all the people. At the end of the flood God made a covenant with Noah and his family and all the animals which had been saved in the ark to the effect that he would not again destroy all living things by a flood (Gen. 9:11).

The history from Noah to Abraham is presented

---

[11] M. Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, p. 265.

in a series of genealogical tables and it is clear that the period holds no importance historically or theologically for the Priestly writers, except as a bridge to connect creation with the later period.

The really distinctive covenantal beginning is in the covenant with Abraham. In a few brief sentences[12] the writers tell us how Terah brought his family out of Babylon, how Abraham went on down into Canaan with his family and his nephew, Lot, how they divided the land between them, how Ishmael was born of an Egyptian slave girl, and then how God appeared to Abraham and made a covenant with him. It is only in this account that the writers expand their narrative and introduce considerable detail.

According to this covenant, God, who was the rightful owner of all the universe, promised to Abraham and his seed forever, that is, to the Hebrew people, the land of Canaan, and to "make thee exceeding fruitful, and . . . make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee" and "to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee". On his part, Abraham was to see that every male, whether "born in the house, or bought with money of a foreigner, that is not of thy seed" was circumcised. Any who was not so circumcised was not among the covenanted people and would be cut off

---

[12]Gen. 11:10-27, 31-32; 12:4b, 5; 13:6a, 11b, 12a; 16:1a, 3, 15-16.

from his people (Gen. 17).

This was the original covenant between God and the Hebrew people. In the Priestly source no new covenant was made with Moses; he was simply reminded of the covenant which God had already made with Abraham and his seed forever and God reaffirmed his former assertion that he would "take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exod. 6:7). When Moses succeeded in leading his people out of their bondage in Egypt he brought them to the holy mountain, ascended the mountain and there was given the revelation of the complete law of God for his covenant people.

As circumcision had been commanded in the Abrahamic covenant in order to mark off those within the covenant from those outside it, so the revelation of God's law to Moses had as its central purpose the maintenance of a people wholly the possession of Yahweh and wholly pure of any defilement which came from contact with persons, or things, or acts which were not the possession or commandment of Yahweh. Such defilement was sin.

If the sin were not intentional then it could be expiated by means of the sin-offering. As a matter of fact the whole ritual cult had as its purpose the expiation of such sins, so that Yahweh could continue to dwell in the midst of his people and bless them with his strength. Most of the sins specifically mentioned, as

we have seen, were of a materially contaminating nature or were unintentional omissions of the sacrificial requirements. Thus, if a man had unintentionally failed to give to God the first-fruits of his harvest, he was required to restore that which he had withheld, plus one-fifth of its value, and to offer, in addition, a "guilt-offering" to Yahweh (Lev. 5:14-16). This expiated his sin and he was once more acceptable to Yahweh. Many sins which are not specifically mentioned with respect to the sin-offering, but which are nonetheless mentioned as prohibitions of Yahweh elsewhere, and would therefore come under a general statement such as Lev. 5:17,[13] are moral in their nature. They, too, had to be atoned for with sin-offerings. One such case is specifically mentioned. If a man should sin and

> commit a trespass against the Lord, and deal falsely with his neighbor in a matter of deposit, or of pledge, or of robbery, or have oppressed his neighbor, or have found that which was lost, and deal falsely therein, and swear to a lie; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein . . . (Lev. 5:21-22).

then he must restore what he has gained in such a manner and must offer a guilt-offering to Yahweh by which atonement may be made for him.

This passage particularly places a broad interpretation upon the meaning of unintentional sins or "sin through error" (cf. Num. 15:24,27). For surely

---

[13]"do any of the things which the Lord hath commanded not to be done".

such a man knew what he was doing and did it deliberately. The meaning of "doing aught with a high hand" for which no atonement could be made, even through sin-offerings (cf. Num. 15:30) must involve deliberate defiance of Yahweh's law and refusal to seek forgiveness through the cult. In that case, as with the man who refused to be circumcised according to the Abrahamic covenant, the only remedy was to cut him off from the community of Yahweh in order that his sin might not infect and bring punishment upon the rest of the covenanted group.

There are a number of examples of such punishment of sin. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to Yahweh which he had not commanded and they were devoured with fire from Yahweh (Lev. 10:1ff). The son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian man blasphemed the name of Yahweh in a fight with another Israelite and was stoned to death (Lev. 24:10-23). A man was found gathering sticks on the sabbath and was likewise stoned to death (Num. 15:32-36). An Isrealite broughta Midianite wife into the camp of Israel at Shittim and was killed by Phinehas for his sin (Num. 25:6-15).

The determining principle in declaring what was contaminating to Israel, that is, unacceptable to Yahweh, seems to have been the exclusion of everything that was naturally abhorrent - diseases such as leprosy or skin eruptions, sexual emissions or discharges, death, etc. - and everything that was foreign - unclean

animals being probably animals which were sacred to foreign gods,[14] foreign wives, etc. To these were added, though not with the prominence given to the ritual matters, acts which had long been considered unIsraelite because of their damage to the members of the covenant people - interest-taking, robbery, oppression of weaker members, false oaths, etc. All such made a person sinful and required a purification through sin-offering. But because an ordinary Israelite was not holy enough to approach the peculiar possessions of Yahweh in the temple, this sin-offering had to be offered by the priests in his behalf. In addition, once a year, the sinfulness of the whole community had to be expiated by the ceremony on the Day of Atonement.

The ritual cult was expensive to maintain and the cost of it fell upon the whole community. Many of the sacrifices were simply "taxes" for the upkeep of the priesthood and the temple. Failure to pay them was failure to maintain the centre of Yahweh's holiness in the community and was therefore, itself, sin (cf. Lev. 5:14-16).

The whole system was rather arbitrary and impersonal. Yahweh was the absolute sovereign of a theocratic state. The land and all its produce belonged

---

[14]Cf. J. Bewer, The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1926), p. 272.

to him; the people and their time from birth to death and all their possessions belonged to him. In order to enjoy the life and the land and the material wealth which he had given to them they must obey his law as it had been revealed to Moses. There was no room for any questioning as to the reason for any of the commands nor as to how the ritual cult effected reconciliation of an offender with God if he sinned by breaking any of the commands. They were God's laws and the priests were peculiarly God's servants to see that the laws were kept and the ritual cult fulfilled.

As the Deuteronomic law earlier had had the effect of focussing the attention of men upon outward conformity to the law so the Priestly Code again made the externals of religion and ethic important. It was a matter of solemn seriousness to fulfill the requirements of the law to the letter and to wipe out any sins which did appear according to the cult provided specifically for that purpose lest

> He will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and so ye will destroy all this people.
> (Num. 32:15).

Yet the Priestly writings were not unfaithful to the prevailing concept of sin as we have seen it developing through the nation's history. They faced a particular situation in which the people might well have been lost by assimilation with other peoples and other cultures if some such provision were not made.

In the period before the Exile the people had had a national character personified in their king and his court. He was the anointed of Yahweh and stood in a special covenanted relationship with Yahweh. He was more or less responsible for maintaining the national integrity of his people so that they would be a holy people to Yahweh and would fulfill the nature Yahweh had intended for them. In the period after the Exile the people had no king, though the immediate returned community seemed to have hoped for one. In such a situation, ruled according to Persian law, having no king to represent the national character, the people might have lost their holiness to Yahweh. The Priestly writers declared that Yahweh was their king, himself, and that the priests of the temple were his servants to carry out his commands.

> Whatever opinion one may hold of the "legalism" of the Priestly Code, it fulfilled its purpose in preserving the Jews as a peculiar nation to the present day.[15]

Even so the Priestly system was not entirely impersonal nor materialistic in its emphasis. In the sin-offerings particularly there was a note of individualism. A man must bring his own sin-offering or his own guilt-offering for his own sin. Sin had become an individual matter between a man and his God (or the law of his God). There were the great congregational

---

[15]Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 270.

festivals, of course, in which the sin of the whole community was expiated. And many even of the individual offerings were no longer offered by the individual nor the sacrificial animal eaten by the worshipper and his family as in earlier days.[16] But the sin was recognized as the sin of an individual and the expiation was made for him and at his expense (cf. Lev. 5:1-10, 17-19; 20-26; et al.).

In the ceremony of the Day of Atonement there was introduced a spiritual feature into the material cult. Aaron laid his hands on the head of the live goat and confessed over him

> all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins. (Lev. 16:21).

Thus confession of sins was a part of the ritual of the expiation of sins. It is this aspect of the celebration of Yom Kippur which is particularly emphasized in modern Judaism. Yet it was incipient in the Priestly provision for the atonement of the sins of the people as the culmination of their whole ritual system.

Some scholars have maintained that, though the Priestly Code is almost obsessed with the idea of sin, it is a shallow obsession in that it makes no provision for the deliberate sinner.[17] This is, of course,

---

[16] Cf. Pedersen, Israel, I, 338.

[17] Cf. Snaith, op. cit., p. 67.

derived from the fact that Leviticus 4 deals specifically with sins committed "through error" (cf. 4:2b,13, 22,27) and that sins "through error" are deliberately contrasted with "doing aught with a high hand" in Numbers 15. Yet Leviticus 5 does not qualify the sins dealt with there as "through error" and, as we have already noted, those listed particularly in 5:20-25 must have been with full knowledge and, therefore, deliberate. Whatever may have been the theory of Num. 15:27-31, the general practice seems to have been to grant atonement for sin to any who did not despise the opportunity to expiate his sin by making the proper sin-offerings.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ATTITUDE OF THE WORKS OF WISDOM

Through the acceptance of the Priestly codification of the ritual law, in which was embodied also the ethical requirements of the Holiness Code, and to which was joined, before 400 B.C., the Deuteronomic Code, the covenant requirements laid upon the Israelites were set down in permanent form. Henceforth a man was "justified" or "condemned" (הִצְדִּיק or הִרְשִׁיעַ) on the basis of this external standard:

> Happy is the man that hath not walked in
> the counsel of the wicked,
> Nor stood in the way of sinners,
> Nor sat in the seat of the scornful.
> But his delight is in the law of the Lord;
> And in his law doth he meditate day
> and night. (Ps. 1:1-2).

The terms "sin", "iniquity" and "transgression"[1] continue to find use in the Psalms and the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, but the striking feature of these books is their much greater use of the terms "wickedness" or "wicked".[2] Of all the uses of this Hebrew root in the Old Testament,

---

[1] פֶּשַׁע עָוֹן חַטָּאת

[2] רָשַׁע

fully two-thirds are found in the books of Isaiah, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes, only one-third in all the rest of the books combined.[3]

Moreover, in a great many passages the other three terms are found in parallelism with this one in such a way as to suggest that, frequently at any rate, they are coterminous in meaning with it.

> His own iniquities shall ensnare the wicked,
> And he shall be holden with the cords of his sin.
> (Prov. 5:22).
>
> Behold the righteous will be requited in the earth,
> How much more the wicked and the sinner.
> (Prov. 11:31).
>
> Righteousness guardeth him that is upright in the way,
> But wickedness overthroweth the sinner.
> (Prov. 13:6).
>
> Therefore shall the wicked not stand in the judgement,
> Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
> (Ps. 1:5).
>
> But transgressors shall be destroyed together,
> The future of the wicked shall be cut off.
> (Ps. 37:38).
>
> Let sinners cease out of the earth,
> And let the wicked be no more.
> (Ps. 104:35).
>
> . . . Thou inquirest after mine iniquity,
> And searchest after my sin,

---

[3] Cf. Brown-Driver-Briggs, Lexicon, p. 957, which notes its use also in Ezekiel. In that book, however, its use is largely confined to chapters 3, 18 and 33, which are concerned with the problem of individual responsibility for sin and which come from the later period of Ezekiel's prophetic work.

> Although thou knowest that I shall not be condemned [אַרְשָׁע] .
> (Job 10:6-7a).[4]

It would not be fair to state that there is no other content to "sin" in these books than the content of "wickedness" but it may be said that in many passages that is the case.

Where רשׁע is used in its verbal form it is almost always found in the Hiph'īl and with the meaning "to condemn" or "to declare guilty" in a court of judgement. Thus in Exodus 22:8

> the cause of both parties shall come before God; he whom God shall condemn shall pay double unto his neighbor.[5]

Likewise in Deuteronomy 25:1

> If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgement, and the judges judge them by justifying [הִצְדִּיקוּ] the righteous [צַדִּיק], and condemning [הִרְשִׁיעוּ] the wicked [רָשָׁע], then it shall be . . .

Solomon used the same technical terminology in his prayer to God at the time of the dedication of the Temple:

> If a man sin against his neighbor . . . then hear Thou in heaven and do and judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his

---

[4]Cf. also Ps. 106:6; Job 10:14-15; 22:5; Eccl. 9:2; et al.

[5]In The Holy Scriptures, (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1917), a note is added to this verse concerning "God", viz., "that is, the judges", thus equating this passage with Deut. 25:1.

way upon his own head; and justifying the righteous,
to give him according to his righteousness.
(I Ki. 8:32).[6]

This same context occurs in the Psalms and the Wisdom literature.

The Lord will not leave him in his hand,
Nor suffer him to be condemned when he is judged.
(Ps. 37:33).

Shall the seat of wickedness have fellowship
with Thee,
Which frameth mischief by statute?
They gather themselves together against the
soul of the righteous,
And condemn innocent blood.
(Ps. 94:21).

If it is a matter of strength, lo, He is mighty.
And if of justice, who will appoint me a time?
Though I be righteous, mine own mouth will
condemn me;
Though I be innocent he shall prove me perverse.
(Job 9:20).

Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I,
Yea thine own lips testify against thee.
(Job 15:6).[7]

It is reasonable to conclude, then, since the verbal form is so often found in a context of judgement according to the law, and since "wicked" and "wickedness" and "righteous" and "righteousness" are so often found in a cognate relationship to the verb declaring one guilty or righteous in such a situation, that this meaning is also involved when the verbal forms are not

---

[6]This passage is almost certainly the work of Deuteronomic editors.

[7]Cf. also Job 34:17; 10:2; 32:3; 40:8; Prov. 12:2; 17:15; et al.

present and when no specific case at court is described.

This is also confirmed by the great number of passages in these books which place "righteous" and "wicked" in antithetic parallelism.

> Treasures of wickedness profit nothing,
> But righteousness delivereth from death.
> The Lord will not suffer the righteous to famish,
> But he thrusteth away the desire of the wicked.
> Blessing are upon the head of the righteous,
> But the mouth of the wicked concealeth violence.
> The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing,
> But the name of the wicked shall rot.
> (Prov. 10:2,3,6,7).

> For the Lord regardeth the way of the righteous,
> But the way of the wicked shall perish.
> (Ps. 1:6).

These are but typical of almost countless passages which might be quoted to show the same thing.[8]

The book of Job puts "iniquity" in the same light, not only by paralleling it with unrighteousness (cf. Job 31:3), but by placing it also in a legal setting:

> For that were a heinous crime,
> Yea it were an iniquity to be punished by the judges. (Job 31:11; cf. also 31:28).

The revealed Law is the standard of righteousness; sin and wickedness are actions contrary to the Law.[9] "They

---

[8]Cf. Prov. 10:16, 20, 24, 25, 28, 30, 32; 11:5, 8, 10, 11; 12:5-7; 13:5, 9, 25; Eccl. 9:2; Ps. 7:10; 11:5; 18:22-25; et al.

[9]Cf. G. F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1927), I, 480, where he quotes the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Righteousness is the "duty which God requireth of man (in) obedience to his revealed will" and sin is "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God".

that forsake the Law praise the wicked" (Prov. 28:4), while the characteristic of the righteous man is his delight in the law of the Lord (Ps. 1:2).

When we seek more specific content for the idea of sin and wickedness than this general definition we find an identification of them with the denial of aspects of common morality and customary Israelite behaviour.

Murder and robbery with violence (Prov. 1:10-11; 4:17; 10:6,10; 24:24; 6:17), oppression of the weak and the poor (22:22-23), despising one's neighbor or discriminating between persons in the courts of justice (14:21; 17:5; 24:21), anger and wrath and slander (29:22; 30:10), lying and false witness (6:16,19), cursing one's father and mother (20:20) - all these are described as sin or iniquity or wickedness.

Eliphaz' indictment of the wickedness of Job is typical:

> Is not thy wickedness great?
> And are not thy iniquities without end?
> For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought,
> And stripped the naked of their clothing.
> Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,
> And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.
> And as a mighty man, who hath the earth,
> And as a man of rank, who dwelleth in it,
> Thou hast sent widows away empty,
> And the arms of the fatherless have been broken.
> (Job 22:5-9).

Pride is also looked upon as sin (Prov. 6:16; 17:19; 21:4; Job 36:9; 40:12) and blasphemy is a particular outcropping of man's pride and impatience

(Job 1:5,22; 2:10). Foolishness, lack of understanding and of intelligence, and the imprudence which arises from them are also considered sin in these books (Prov. 8:36; 10:19; 12:8; 19:2; 24:9; 28:2; Eccl. 9:18). This is, of course, to be expected in books which praise wisdom as the handmaid of the Lord and the particular help of man in fulfilling the purposes of God.

One of the most characteristic attitudes in all these writings is the orthodox belief that wickedness will inevitably bring punishment and righteousness will inevitably bring reward. This is found throughout Proverbs,[10] in the speeches of the friends in the book of Job,[11] and in a number of references in Ecclesiastes.[12]

As Pfeiffer has pointed out,[13] this division of the people into two classes - the righteous and the wicked; those who kept the Law and those who broke it - was paralleled particularly in Deuteronomy and Proverbs by a division of all of life into "two ways". This is most clearly stated in the earlier book of Deuteronomy:

> See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to

---

[10]Cf. 2:22; 3:22; 5:21-22; 10:2, 7, 27; 11:31; 12:7, 13; 13:5, 6; 23:17-18; 24:20; 29:16; et al.

[11]Cf. 8:4, 22; 11:20; 15:20; 18:5; 20:5; 27:13; 36:6; et al.

[12]Cf. 2:26.

[13]Pfeiffer, Introduction, pp. 657-8.

> walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances; then thou shalt live and multiply in the land whither thou goest in to possess it. But if thou wilt turn away, and thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them; I declare unto you this day that ye shall surely perish . . . I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed . . .
> (Deut. 30:15-20).

Here the two ways are the way of Yahweh and the way of other gods. The characteristic of Yahweh's way is the keeping of his commandments and statutes and ordinances which were, of course, set forth in the Deuteronomic Code.

In Proverbs the two ways are the way of righteousness and the way of wickedness:

> But the path of the righteous is as the light of the dawn,
> That shineth more and more into perfect day.
> The way of the wicked is as darkness;
> They know not at what they stumble. (Prov. 4:18).

> To deliver thee from the way of evil,
> From men that speak froward things;
> Who leave the paths of uprightness,
> To walk in the ways of darkness;
> Who rejoice to do evil,
> And delight in the frowardness of evil;
> Who are crooked in their ways,
> And perverse in their paths. (Prov. 2:12-15).

The way of the righteous is walked in obedience to Yahweh while the way of the wicked is walked in scorn of him (Prov. 14:2; Ps. 1:1-2).

Just as in Deuteronomy the way of Yahweh is the way of life and blessing and the other way is the way

of death and the curse, so in Proverbs the way of the upright will eventually bring the great rewards and will be smoother and safer than the other way.

> The way of the sluggard is as though hedged
> by thorns;
> But the path of the upright is even. (15:19).
>
> He that walketh uprightly walketh securely;
> But he that perverteth his ways shall be
> found out. (10:9).
>
> The righteousness of the sincere shall make
> straight his way;
> But the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.
> (11:5).

Though Proverbs does not make any statement to the effect that Yahweh supports and upholds those who fulfil his covenant obligations, it seems to me that underneath many of his declarations about the certainty of the destruction of the wicked and the blessing of the righteous that understanding of life is presupposed.

> When the wicked are increased, transgression
> increaseth,
> But the righteous shall gaze upon their fall.
> (29:6).
>
> For the ways of man are before the eyes of
> the Lord,
> And he maketh even all his paths.
> His own iniquities shall ensnare the wicked,
> And he shall be holden with the cords of his sin.
> (5:21-22).
>
> Righteousness guardeth him that is upright in
> the way,
> But wickedness overthroweth the sinner.
> (13:6).

The term "covenant" (בְּרִית) occurs only

once in Proverbs and that only in a passage which refers to a woman who has forsaken her husband and forgotten "the covenant of her God" (2:17). But it is perhaps not without significance that it seems to be this lack of fidelity to an obligation undertaken within the "covenant of her God" which characterizes her as a "strange woman" whose paths lead "unto the shades" and who is a danger to the "way of good men" and to the "paths of the righteous".[14] Several passages in the Psalms do parallel fidelity to the covenant with the same expressions as are used in Proverbs of the righteous, e.g. "paths" and "fear of Yahweh".

> All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth
> Unto such as keep his covenant and his
> testimonies.
> The counsel of the Lord is with them that
> fear him,
> And his covenant to make them know it.
> (Ps. 25:10, 14).

> All this is come upon us; yet we have not
> forgotten Thee,
> Neither have we been false to Thy covenant.
> Our heart is not turned back,
> Neither have our steps declined from Thy path.
> (Ps. 44:18-19).[15]

There is certainly the fundamental belief in all the Wisdom literature, particularly set forth in Proverbs, that sin and wickedness result in darkness,

---

[14] For commentary on this passage see C. H. Toy, The Book of Proverbs, (ICC; New York, Scribner's, 1908), pp. 46-47; also W.O.E. Oesterley, Proverbs, (Westminster Commentaries; London, Methuen, 1929), p. 17.

[15] Cf. also Pss. 50:16; 78:10; 103:18.

weakness, destruction and hopelessness, because there is no support from Yahweh who controls all of life.

> The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the upright,
> But ruin to the workers of iniquity. (10:29).[16]

H. W. Robinson considers the concept of sin here as limited because it makes the basis of right conduct the prosperity in which it results but he adds that

> the truth that the sinner sets himself against the morally directed forces of the universe must not be overlooked.[17]

I believe that this "truth" is a manifestation of the presupposition of the covenant of Yahweh with individuals which was the heritage of the writers of wisdom literature from the prophets, particularly through Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Though there is always a sense of contrast in these writings between the righteous and wicked, there is also a consciousness, vaguely expressed though it may be, that no man is entirely free from sin.

> Who can say: I have made my heart clean,
> I am pure from sin? (Prov. 20:9).

> For there is no righteous man upon earth,
> That doeth good and sinneth not. (Eccl. 7:20).

> Shall mortal man be just before God?
> Shall a man be pure before his Maker?
> (Eliphaz in Job 4:17).

---

[16]Cf. also Prov. 10:16; 11:31; 13:6; 13:21; 13:17-19.

[17]H. W. Robinson, Christian Doctrine of Man, p. 54.

This acknowledgement is not much more than a whisper in the wisdom books; it becomes much stronger and more central in the Psalms.

Personal forgiveness of others' sins is considered to be wisdom since it does away with strife (Prov. 10:12) and is the mark of a real manliness (Prov. 19:11). Forgiving others wins their friendship rather than estranging them forever (Prov. 17:9).

In the matter of one's own sin before Yahweh it is clearly stated that only mercy and truth will expiate sin (Prov. 16:6), only confession and forsaking evil ways (Prov. 28:13; cf. also Job 33:27-28) will cover over sin. Sacrifice is of no avail if it is not accompanied by righteousness. This is particularly true of the sacrifices of wicked men:

> The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination
> to the Lord,
> But the prayer of the upright is his delight.
> (Prov. 15:8).

> The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination,
> How much more when he bringeth it with the
> proceeds of wickedness. (Prov. 21:27).

But there seems to be a question even of sincere sacrifice:

> To do righteousness and justice
> Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.
> (Prov. 21:3).

The Book of Proverbs reflects the orthodox faith that righteousness is always rewarded by strength, wealth, peace and security and that wickedness is

always repaid with death, uncertain prosperity at the best, lack of peace and great insecurity. The validity of the application of this dogma to all of life was not, however, unchallenged. Two books of the Old Testament canon do challenge it, though it is questionable whether they view life from any other point of view themselves. These books are Job and Ecclesiastes.

In the prologue and epilogue of the book of Job, Job is presented as a man "blameless and upright, and one that feared God and shunned evil" (1:1). He enjoyed a large family, large flocks and herds, a peaceful and happy existence. He was always very careful to cover any possible sins, even of his children, with burnt-offerings to God.

Though this is in accord with the orthodox belief and the epilogue restores the vindicated righteous man to his former abundance and blessings, yet the very statement of the problem of the folk-story implies a higher view of righteousness than a purely utilitarian one. For it recognizes that if Job was righteous only because of the good things he enjoyed he was not worthy of God's commendation; if he was righteous and did not sin even when all good things were taken away from him, then he was worthy. This is the setting and the problem of the folk-story into which the dialogues of the poem have been set.

In the dialogues, however, the whole question of

the validity of the application of the orthodox equation of righteousness and prosperity and wickedness and suffering is subjected to analysis and argument. Job's own situation is the test-case.

As we have already seen, the arguments of Job's friends are based squarely on the orthodox belief.

> Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished,
> being innocent?
> Or where were the upright cut off?
> According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity
> And sow mischief, reap the same. (Eliphaz, 4:7-8).
>
> Behold, God will not cast away an innocent man,
> Neither will he uphold evil-doers. (Bildad, 8:20).
>
> If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away,
> And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents -
> Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face
> without spot;
> Yea thou shalt be stedfast and fear not.
> (Zophar, 11:14-15).[18]

But it seems to me that even Job's speeches recognize the orthodox belief as basically sound though he sees evidence around him that it is not universally applicable and he refuses to acknowledge that it means that he, himself, is unrighteous.

Thus, in answer to the implied accusations of Eliphaz (cf. 4:17; 5:17-27), Job asks his friends to show him where he has erred (6:24) and at least acknowledges hypothetically that he might have sinned:

---

[18] These are taken from the first cycle of speeches where the friends have not yet been stung to accuse Job directly of sin, which they do later. Cf. 22:4-13.

> If I have sinned . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . why dost thou not pardon my transgressions,
> And take away mine iniquity? (7:20-21).

Likewise in a direct plea to God Job demands to know what sins and transgressions he is charged with (13:23), for he assumes that such must be the occasion for God's punishment of him. Indeed, he seems to conclude that God is punishing him for the long-forgotten sins of his youth (23:26). In chapter 31 there is a long catalogue of sins for which Job admits he would expect God's wrath, were he guilty of them.

In all these, the orthodox belief that the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer is the basis of his thinking. Where he challenges the belief is in its corollary. His friends have concluded that the prosperous must be righteous and the sufferers must be wicked, therefore that Job is guilty of some sins which he will not acknowledge or of which he is not conscious. Job, however, denies his unrighteousness and declares that God is unjust in his dealings with him. God seems to be searching through Job's life for some little sins for which He may punish him, though He should know that Job is not condemnable (10:5-7). Indeed, Job declares that it doesn't matter whether he is righteous or wicked, he would still have suffered the same (10:14-15). Moreover, he points to many examples of wicked men who are prospering and are secure in their

life (12:3-6; 21:7-30) as evidence that God is not just in his dealings.

Job's answer to his doubts and bewilderment is an application and extension of the same orthodox principle to the future, an assertion that he will yet be vindicated and his righteousness acknowledged. The basis of this is his dogged insistence that he has been righteous. Chapter 29 is a description of his life in the days before his suffering, when his righteousness was properly rewarded with reverence and a place in the community.

> Because I delivered the poor that cried,
> The fatherless also that had none to help him.
> The blessing of him that was ready to perish
> came upon me;
> And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
> I put on righteousness, and it clothed itself
> with me;
> My justice was as a robe and diadem.
> I was eyes to the blind,
> And feet was I to the lame;
> I was a father to the needy,
> And the cause of him that I knew not I searched
> out. (29:12-16).

Chapter 27:4-6 is an assertion that he is still righteous and will never cease to be:

> Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness,
> Neither shall my tongue utter deceit.
> . . . . . .
> Till I die I will not put away mine integrity
> from me.
> My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let
> it go.

Because he <u>knows</u> that he is not wicked or sinful, he also <u>knows</u> that he will yet be vindicated.

> Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
> And he that testifieth of me is on high. (16:19).

> But as for me, I know that my redeemer liveth,
> And that he will witness at the last upon
> the dust. (19:25).

It is this great asseveration of faith, that he will be vindicated because of his righteousness and blamelessness, which is the culminating point of the whole book. The magnificent speech of Yahweh out of the whirlwind (38: 1-40:2; 40:6-41:26) and Job's meek renunciation of all that he has said, are anti-climax and almost certainly a later attempt to write in a solution to the problem which the writer of the book confronted.[19]

Similar in treatment but different in conclusion is the book of Ecclesiastes. His observations of life proved to his own satisfaction that there was absolutely no truth in the orthodox belief.

Wickedness and iniquity usurped the place of justice and righteousness and God allowed it to be so (3:16ff).[20] The weak were continually oppressed but their tearful prayers were to no avail since the oppressors had power on their side (4:1). The righteous man

---

[19] Cf. N. Schmidt, The Messages of the Poets, (Messages of the Bible Series; New York, Scribner's, 1911), pp. 210-2. This is the opinion also of W. A. Irwin as expressed in class notes on Job, University of Chicago, 1943. But for contrary opinion, cf. A. S. Peake, Job, (Century Bible; Edinburgh, T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1904), p. 332.

[20] Verse 17 is probably a later interpolation attempting to right the improper conclusions of Koheleth. Cf. A. H. McNeile, An Introduction to Ecclesiastes, (Cambridge, University Press, 1904), pp. 85, 99.

often died an untimely death while the wicked man prolonged his days to old age (7:15). Even in death the wicked often received the honorable burial while the righteous were buried away from the sacred tombs and were forgotten (8:10).

> There are righteous men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous - I said this also is vanity. (8:14).

So his conclusion of the whole matter of sin and righteousness was that there is no difference between them so far as God's concern is considered.

> All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event to all. (9:2-3a).

CHAPTER IX

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PSALMISTS

It has recently been the trend to consider it unrewarding to attempt a chronology of the Psalms. Pfeiffer dates all of them between 400 and 100 B.C.,[1] while others have pleaded pre-exilic dates for some and exilic dates for others.[2] By and large, however, it may be assumed that the Psalms are a good reflection of the popular pietistic religion of the period from about 200 B.C. to the time of Jesus, for it was in that period that they were immensely popular.

Psalm 1, which is an introduction to the whole Psalter,[3] sets the general tone for all the psalms when it sets forth the familiar pattern of the "Two ways". This we have already seen as the basic pattern also of Proverbs and the underlying dogma of Job and

---

[1]Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, pp. 629-31, though he admits the possibility of a pre-exilic date for 24:7-10 and 45.

[2]Cf. A. F. Kirkpatrick, The Book of the Psalms, (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge, University Press, 1906), pp. xxxv-l.

[3]Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 627; Bewer, op. cit., pp. 343f.; J. Paterson, The Praises of Israel, (New York, Scribner's, 1950), pp. 192-3.

Ecclesiastes. The one way is the way of the righteous man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. His life will be blessed and strong:

> He shall be like a tree planted by streams
> of water,
> That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
> And whose leaf doth not wither;
> And in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper. (1:3).

The other way is that of the wicked man. He is

> . . . like the chaff which the wind driveth
> away.
> Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the
> judgement,
> Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
> (1:4-5).

Dividing mankind thus into two camps - the righteous and the wicked, the Psalms then reflect the current belief that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer and be destroyed.

> . . . evil-doers shall be cut off,
> But those that wait for the Lord, they shall
> inherit the land. (37:8).
>
> For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
> But the Lord upholdeth the righteous. (37:16).
>
> For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit
> the land,
> And they that are cursed of Him shall be
> cut off. (37:22).
>
> Evil shall kill the wicked;
> And they that hate the righteous shall be held
> guilty.
> The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants,
> And none of them that take refuge in him shall
> be desolate. (34:22-23).[4]

---

[4]Cf. also the rest of 37; 39:12; 89:31-33; 107:17; et al.

This is not so mechanical and arbitrary a belief as some would make it to be who look upon the Wisdom literature and this aspect of the Psalms as a low level of religious faith. It is not just an assertion that "we are righteous and you are sinners and God is on our side". It is rather an outgrowth of a firm belief that

> . . . God is the King of all the earth;
> . . . . . .
> God reigneth over the nations;
> God sitteth upon his holy throne. (47:8-9).

The Psalmists had inherited from the prophets and historians before them the belief that God had entered into covenant with man and had revealed himself as a just and righteous God who upheld those who kept his covenant and punished those who broke it.

> For ever will I keep for him my mercy,[5]
> And my covenant shall stand fast with him.
> . . . . . .
> If his children forsake my law,
> And walk not in mine ordinances,
> If they profane my statutes,
> And keep not my commandments,
> Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod,
> And their iniquity with strokes.
> But my mercy will I not break off from him,[5]
> Nor will I be false to my faithfulness,
> My covenant will I not profane,
> Nor alter that which is gone out of my lips.
> Once have I sworn by my holiness:
> Surely I will not be false to David. (Ps. 89:29-36).

> All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth,
> Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
> (Ps. 25:10).

> The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to[5]

---

[5]The Hebrew word for "mercy" in each case is חסד, which is best defined in relation to the obligations of the covenant. Cf. Lofthouse, "Hen and Hesed", op. cit.

everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;
To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his precepts to do
them. (Ps. 103:17-18).

Believing thus that God had revealed his will to man and had promised his holy support and power to those who responded to it in righteousness and obedience, the Psalmist divided mankind, on the basis of observation and experience, into the two camps of righteous and wicked.

But his very experience with this division is the basis of a deep perplexity which fell upon the Psalmist as it had upon Job and to a less profound extent upon Ecclesiastes. So many of the Psalmists were righteous men; they have no doubt of their comparative righteousness, at any rate. But they also experience suffering, or embarrassment, or oppression at the hands of some of their wicked contemporaries. This is the experience of the community:

All this has come upon is; yet have we not
forgotten Thee,
Neither have we been false to Thy covenant.
Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from Thy path.
(Ps. 44:18-19).

It is also the experience of the individual:

Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine
integrity,
And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.
. . . . . .
I have not sat with men of falsehood;
Neither will I go in with dissemblers.
I hate the gathering of evil-doers,
And will not sit with the wicked.

I will wash my hands in innocency;
So will I compass thine altar, O Lord,
That I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be
heard . . . (Ps. 26:1, 4-6).[6]

So bitter is the experience of the Psalmists that many of them give way to imprecations upon the heads of those who seem to them wicked and who oppress them or lord it over them or taunt them. This attitude is particularly manifested in the so-called "Imprecatory Psalms",[7] but it crops out in many of the others.

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the
vengeance;
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
And men shall say: Verily there is a reward for
the righteous;
Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.
(58:11-12).

On the other hand, the writers of these psalms, though frequently apparently self-righteous and vindictive when contrasting their own condition with that of others, when confronted with their God and his holiness are prepared to admit their own sinfulness and to plead for forgiveness.

For I do declare mine iniquity,
I am full of care because of my sin. (38:19).

Pardon mine iniquity for it is great. (25:11).

I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine
iniquity have I not hid. (32:5).

For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me. (51:5).

---

[6]Cf. also Pss. 5, 7, 17, et al.

[7]Pss. 35, 55, 69, 83, 109; also 58:10; 59:13; et al.

Sometimes, it is true, the acknowledgement of sin seems to be nothing more than an acknowledgement of suffering or disability of some kind and, therefore, a presupposition of sin.

> Deliver me from all my transgressions;
> Make me not the reproach of the base. (39:9).
>
> As for me, I said: O Lord, be gracious unto me;
> Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.
> My enemies speak evil of me . . .
> . . . . . .
> All that hate me whisper against me . . .
> . . . . . .
> But thou, O Lord, be gracious unto me and
> raise me up
> That I may requite them. (41:5, 6, 8, 11).[8]

But these do not constitute the majority, nor the most significant, of the confessions of sin in the Psalms. There is real acknowledgement of sin of a deep-seated and intentional nature. The second Psalm of the trilogy of historical psalms which make up 105-107 is an historical parade of the sins of the nation, in its pride and obstinacy and rebellion against God's known will:

> We have sinned with our fathers,
> We have done iniquitously, we have dealt wickedly.
> Our fathers in Egypt gave no heed unto thy
> wonders . . .

They were rebellious at the Red Sea (106:7), they lusted after the flesh-pots of Egypt (106:13-15), they rebelled against Moses' leadership (106:16-18), they set up a molten image of the calf-god (106:19-23), and in

---

[8]Cf. also 69, 79.

many other ways showed their lack of faith in God's promises and the leaders he had given them.

The author of Psalm 25 remembers specific sins of his youth for which he seeks forgiveness. The writer of Psalm 51 is also deeply aware of his sin and, apparently, of its nature:

> For I know my transgressions;
> And my sin is ever before me.
> Against thee, thee only have I sinned,
> And done that which is evil in thy sight.
> (51:5-6).

In none of these is there any specific content given to sin except the general definition of rebelling against the commandments of God. In other passages falsehood (52:4-5; 3:7; 7:15; 101:7), bloodshed (5:7), slander (101:5), spoiling one's enemy to utter destruction (7:4-5), pride (101:5) are all equated with sin or iniquity, but walking in the way of the perverse and wicked, that is, contrary to the way of the righteous is the most frequent definition given.

So deep and pervasive is the personal acquaintance with sin that the Psalmists once or twice declare what amounts to the universal sweep of sin.

> I was brought forth in iniquity,
> And in sin did my mother conceive me. (51:7).

This is not a statement of any doctrine of Original Sin, as some have tried to read it, but a reflection on the universal weakness in mankind which leads him to sin against the covenant requirements of God.[9] Psalm 130

---

[9]Cf. Paterson, op. cit., pp. 101-2.

reflects the same universal sinfulness when it asks the question:

> If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,
> O Lord, who could stand? (130:3).

Even if a man were to review his life and decide that it was clear of all sinfulness he was cautioned to remember that a man can scarcely "discern his errors" or his "secret faults" (19:12). Though there is, as we have seen, a natural inclination for the Psalmists to compare themselves favorably with the "wicked", and at times to exhibit great spiritual pride, yet faced by the perfect holiness and the divine requirements of God they exhibited also a spiritual humility which recognized the inherent weakness of men and, therefore, the universal sway of sinfulness.

It is perhaps natural, then, that the Psalms place a considerable emphasis upon the mercy of God and his willingness to forgive the sins of those who turn to him for such forgiveness. No other single representative portion of the Old Testament, with the possible exception of Second Isaiah, lays so much emphasis upon it. Thus, alongside passages complaining to God of his failure to uphold the righteous and punish the wicked, we find such a passage as 103:10 which looks back over the history of the people and says:-

> He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
> Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

and then goes on to acknowledge:

As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
(103:12).

As it has been true of past experience so it is the hope expressed in many Psalms for the future.

The tale of iniquities is too heavy for me;
But as for our transgressions, thou wilt
pardon them. (65:4).

The certainty that He will pardon their sins and transgressions is the basis of their prayers for such in Psalm after Psalm.[10]

But this pardon is the free gift of God and cannot be bought with sacrifices or with gifts. The sacrificial system is not condemned in all the Psalms. Indeed one or two passages accept it with perfect naturalness:

I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices
with trumpet-sound,
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.
(27:6).

How can I repay unto the Lord
All his bountiful dealings toward me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the Lord,
My vows will I pay unto the Lord,
Yea, in the presence of all his people.
(116:12-13).

The use of the phrases "purge me with hyssop" and "wash me" in Psalm 51 indicate that the psalmist is quite familiar with the ritual symbolism, but verses 16-19 indicate that he did not consider the material

---

[10]Cf. 25:11, 18; 39:9; 41:5; 78:38; 79:9; 85:3; 103:3; et al.

sacrifices enough if he accepted them at all.

The conditions necessary for forgiveness are the confession of one's sins (32:5) and the sincere desire to live a righteous life. "Sacrifices of righteousness" and "trust in the Lord", an open ear and "delight to do Thy will" (4:5; 40:8f) are what Yahweh wants rather than sacrifices and meal-offerings, burnt-offerings and sin-offerings (40:7).

> Thou hast no delight in sacrifice, else would
> I give it;
> Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering.
> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
> A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou
> wilt not despise. (51:18-19).

The major characteristic of the Psalms, with respect to the concept of sin, is their faith and certainty that Yahweh is on his throne, that he is able to defend his holy people, and that he will reward the righteous with a sure and firm life. He has revealed his will in his Law and those who follow it, or who, having forsaken it, return to it in humility and penitence, are accounted righteous and may be assured of Yahweh's pardon and continued blessing.

> They that trust in the Lord
> Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but
> abideth forever.
> As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
> So the Lord is round about his people,
> From this time forth and forever. (125:1-2).

> Do good, O Lord, unto the good,
> And to them that are upright in their hearts.
> But as for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways,
> The Lord will lead them away with the workers of
> iniquity,
> Peace be upon Israel. (125:4-5).

CHAPTER X

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF SIN

At the beginning of this study I noted that we would be dealing with a literature which covered a period of several centuries and that we must be prepared to find many different concepts of sin or, at least, many different expressions of the concept. I expressed the hope, however, that there might emerge from the total picture a basic Old Testament concept of sin which would be seen to underly all the variety of expression to which it might give rise in different periods. We ought now to be in a position to set forth that concept if it exists.

Our study, I believe, has shown that such a concept does exist. It has shown that the essence of sin is simply the breach of the covenant. The idea of the covenant is fundamental to everything that is said of sin in the Old Testament. In some writings this is explicitly stated; in others it becomes evident when we examine what they have to say about the nature of sin.

As Baab has said,

> Whatever the historian's attitude toward these matters as history, there is no better

> authenticated event in Israel's history than that centering in the making of the covenant, if the biblical testimony itself is considered.[1]

By the covenant, Israel became Yahweh's holy people and possession and Yahweh became Israel's God. The holiness of Yahweh expressed itself in two ways: first, in power to defend what was uniquely his within the covenant from misappropriation or abuse, and second, in power to defend his covenant people from harm and to give them strength and prosperity of life. Thus his holiness and power was both beneficial to the covenant people because it was the source of their strength and well-being, and it was dangerous to the covenant people because it could be directed against them if they trespassed upon it.

The holiness of the people was that character of strength and welfare which Yahweh's support gave to them. But this character had to be upheld also by themselves by avoidance of acts which weakened the group and made it a blemished possession of Yahweh. Each member of the group had a part in the covenant strength and, even in the earliest period, it was sin to violate his position within the group. Thus the customs of the people which contributed to the strength and unity of the group were supported by the power of Yahweh, and breach of them was sin. The Decalogue is probably the

---

[1] Baab, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 137.

earliest statement of that which was an infringement upon the holiness of Yahweh and of his covenant people.

It is natural for us to make a distinction between the moral and non-moral aspects of this covenant relationship.[2] But the distinction was an unnatural one as far as the nature of the covenant itself was concerned. Either non-moral[3] or moral infringements on the holiness of Yahweh or of his peculiar possessions was sin.

The pre-exilic prophets fought against two great dangers to the continuance of the covenant upon which the strength and eventual position of the Israelite people depended and it condemned both of them as sin. The first was the honoring of other deities than Yahweh. This seems to have begun as a gradual encroachment of a peripheral recognition of the Canaanite deities into the centre of the cult. In later periods both Assyrian and Babylonian deities were also honored. This was a breach of the covenant at its very roots and was the worst manifestation of sin.

The second danger was the gradual crippling of the covenant people itself by acts which pitted some members of the covenant against others and denied the basic covenant rights of those who were disadvantaged

---

[2]Cf. Burrows, Outline of Biblical Theology, pp. 165-166.

[3]Many of the non-moral elements bear a similarity to and probably a developmental relationship to elements of "Mana" and "Taboo" in other early religions.

and unable to defend themselves. Murder, adultery, theft, false witness, economic exploitation - all these weakened Yahweh's people by dividing them against each other, and a weakened people was a violation of Yahweh's holiness. By their emphasis upon the ethical character of Yahweh's demands these prophets introduced a new emphasis into the concept of Yahweh's holiness. They equated it with "righteousness" which they identified with "justice, honesty and fair dealing between man and man".[4]

Yet to describe the work of these prophets as simply "ethical" is to minimize the importance of the covenant in their thinking. And, though they do not use the term itself frequently, I believe their references to Yahweh's demands and the punishment which would follow refusal to implement them, has shown that they did have the covenant constantly in mind. They did not arrive at their demands by idealizing the best they knew in human conduct; they arrived at them according to their understanding of the "nature" (i.e. the "holiness") of Yahweh, himself.[5]

Toward the end of the pre-exilic period the prophetic demands were codified in explicit form in the

---

[4]Snaith, Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, p. 59.

[5]Cf. H. W. Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, p. 80.

Deuteronomic laws and these were explicitly stated to be the norm of the covenant of Yahweh. The covenant responsibility of the people was identified with the fulfilment of those laws and sin was identified with breaking those laws. Sin has thus become almost entirely outward. Evidence of this is the Deuteronomic statement that sins must be seen by at least two witnesses before they can be punished by the community.

Just before the exile there were two prophets who were troubled by the implications of the Deuteronomic Code and its attitude to sin. Habakkuk and Jeremiah were both concerned by the fact that there was much obvious sin in the community but no evidence of punishment, and that there was suffering where there was apparently no outward sin. Though Jeremiah maintained the same attitude to the "nature" of Yahweh and his covenant demands as his predecessors, i.e. that it demanded ethical behaviour, he sought an answer to his own and Habakkuk's questionings in a shift of the emphasis from the outward act to the inward attitudes of mind and heart, and from the group to the individual. Nonetheless the covenant remained his main point of reference.

The book of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah's commentary on it proved to be a great watershed in the Hebrew concept of sin. Henceforth there seem to be three expressions of the concept, two of which are

developed from implications of the Deuteronomic code and one of which is a reaction against it.

First, Deuteronomy set down the ethical requirements of the prophets as the laws of the covenant and commanded obedience to them. It became an axiom that obedience would bring prosperity and happiness and disobedience would bring failure and suffering. This almost inevitably led to an individualistic conception of sin. Deuteronomy only once expressed this explicitly,[6] but Jeremiah took it up,[7] and Ezekiel set it forth in considerable detail.[8] It was in connection with this that the rigid distinction between the "righteous" and the "wicked" was first made.[9] This became the main theme of the wisdom literature and most of the Psalms, in which the distinction was accentuated because the priestly law had, in the meantime, been added to the Deuteronomic code, and all considered the law of the covenant of Yahweh.

Second, the fact of the codification of law had an effect on later thought. In the exilic period, when the Jews were living in isolation from the forms of life which had centred around the temple and in close

---

[6]Deut. 24:16.

[7]Jer. 31:29-34.

[8]Ezek. 3:16-21; 18; 33:1-20.

[9]The distinction may be found earlier but it is rare, whereas in Ezekiel (3, 18, 33), the Psalms, and the wisdom literature it is found again and again.

contact with foreign customs and peoples, the priests had an opportunity and an incentive not only to codify the ethical principles which had come to be considered the covenant commands of Yahweh but also to codify and elaborate the ritual forms which had been growing up in the pre-exilic temple before its destruction. These, too, the priests declared to be the covenant requirements of Yahweh, though such a declaration involved a complete re-writing of the whole history of the people to vindicate it. The real purpose of many of the laws, and probably of the Law as a whole, was to keep Israel free from the contamination of foreign customs and personal contact. It is almost ironic that, in doing this, the priests were greatly influenced by the ritual practices of the Babylonians themselves and by the materialistic concept of sin which they held. Ezekiel had anticipated this whole attitude in his vision of the restored community in Jerusalem and his provisions for its holiness.

Both these developments arose out of implications of the Deuteronomic codification. But there was a third development which was a reaction against the implications of legal and ritual systems. It was expressed in apocalyptic literature. As with the prophets and the priestly literature the worst manifestation of sin was that which was foreign to the proper nature of Israel. But because of the pressure

and oppression of foreign nations upon Israel these writers tended to identify sin with the foreign nations themselves and with those in Israel who did not oppose them to the death. They felt that wickedness was becoming universal. Nonetheless they believed that Yahweh would be faithful to his covenant promises and would manifest his faithfulness in great power and in the victory of Israel over all her foreign foes. Then would come a miraculous transformation of the sinful earth and an establishment of the purged community of Israel with its centre in Jerusalem. The reaction here was against the implicit idea of both prophetic and priestly thought that sin could be avoided or expiated by man through obedience to the revealed will of Yahweh. The covenant is still central in the definition of sin for mankind has broken the covenant (cf. Isa. 24:5) and is sinful beyond his own power to heal.

In this survey we see that the covenant is basic throughout. In its earliest statement moral and non-moral elements are almost equally prominent. In the prophets moral considerations are most prominent but non-moral elements have not entirely disappeared.[10] In the post-exilic period both elements are again present and a third attitude of pessimism concerning sin and optimism concerning the power and the intention

---

[10]Cf. Isaiah's vision in the temple; Isa. 6.

of Yahweh to fulfil his covenant promises.

There are a number of features of the concept of sin which later dogma both in Judaism and Christianity made prominent but which are not central in the Old Testament records. These are the idea that sin is necessarily universal, the idea that sin is inborn in man's physical nature, and the doctrine of "original sin".[11]

The idea that sin is necessarily universal involves the assumption that man is somehow incapable of obedience to the covenant demands of Yahweh and also the assumption that foreign peoples as well as Israelites are under the judgement of Yahweh.

In pre-exilic literature the main concern is with the sins of the Israelites. The only way in which foreign peoples are considered to sin is by violation of the holiness of Yahweh or of the welfare and integrity of his holy people. The one notable exception to this is Amos who is also the notable exception to the general view that Yahweh had revealed his will only to Israel. As the nations have some knowledge of Yahweh's will they also have some responsibility for their transgressions against it. But even Amos is mainly concerned with the sins of Israel.

---

[11] The doctrine of "original sin" is not present at all in the Old Testament, but I discuss it here because it has been so universally associated with the Old Testament as a doctrine.

In post-exilic literature covenant thought went back to the time of Noah and, at least in theory, included all peoples, though the Abrahamic covenant was more explicit in its promises of future welfare and its demands of obedience. The Priestly Code provided for the inclusion of foreigners in the covenant if they submitted to circumcision and obeyed the laws. Second Isaiah interpreted the mission of Israel and her suffering as being for the eventual inclusion of the nations in Yahweh's covenant, and the books of Jonah and Ruth are aimed in the same direction. Israel always remained the nucleus of the covenant people, of course, for other peoples had to become "Israelite" to be included, but Yahweh's concern was universal and therefore sin was universal. Apocalyptic literature speaks in these broad terms when dealing with the sin of the earth.

> The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof;
> Because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statute,
> Broken the everlasting covenant. (Isa. 24:5).

The other aspect of the universality of sin - that man is incapable of obedience to the covenant commands - seems to be presupposed by many passages. Here again all are post-exilic.[12] Moreover, what they

---

[12]Gen. 6:5, 11-13 is hardly applicable since it makes an observation concerning man only at one moment in history. Even then, Noah seems to be an exception.

are examined they are seen to say no more than that man does not, not that he cannot, obey the commands.

> There is no man that sinneth not. (I Ki. 8:46).
>
> Who can say, I have made my heart clean,
> I am pure from my sin? (Prov. 20:9).
>
> Surely there is not a righteous man upon earth,
> That doeth good and sinneth not. (Eccl. 7:20).
>
> If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,
> O Lord, who could stand? (Ps. 130:3).

This seemingly universal fact of sinfulness in man, however, did raise questions as to "Why?". The answer seems to have been found in the physical and moral frailty of man. Passages such as Job 4:17-19; 15:14-16; 25:4; and Ps. 51:7 have been interpreted to mean that sin was a sort of physical taint inborn in man,[13] but are probably better interpreted to indicate man's inherent weakness and finitude in comparison with the power and demands of God.[14] The power of God was available if men fulfilled the covenant demands but men preferred to trust their own arms and their own flesh,[15] and were thus led into sin. The Old Testament does not teach that men were incapable of obedience but

---

[13]Cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction, p. 545.

[14]Cf. Schultz, Old Testament Theology, I, 243-4, 252-3; Irwin, "Hebrew Religion", Frankfort, et al., Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, p. 258; Baab, Theology of the Old Testament, pp. 107-8; H. W. Robinson, Christian Doctrine of Man, p. 57.

[15]Cf. Jer. 17:5-8.

that they were universally disobedient and therefore sinners.[16]

The idea of "original sin" which is different from the idea that sin is inborn in every person, is not native to the Old Testament. It arose in later Judaism as an explanation of the apparent fact that all men were sinners and as a desire to find that explanation in one of the early stories of the Old Testament. The story first so used was that of the union of the sons of the gods with the daughters of men (Gen. 6:1-4). Later the story of Genesis 3 was taken as better suiting all the dogmatic needs.[17]

The narrative of Genesis 3, itself, is now pretty generally considered an aetiological legend explaining some interesting facts of human experience as punishments for disobedience of specific commands of Yahweh. Whether the "knowledge of good and evil" which the fruit of the tree was to impart refers to beneficial and detrimental features of civilization,[18] or to "sexual consciousness",[19] the central point of

---

[16]Even this is not without exceptions. Cf. Job 29-31; Prov. 20:7; Eccl. 7:15; et al.

[17]Williams, Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin, pp. 12-90.

[18]Cf. Robinson, Christian Doctrine of Man, p. 39.

[19]Cf. R. Gordis, "The Significance of the Paradise Myth", AJSL, LII (1936), 88-91.

the story is that eating the fruit was disobedience to Yahweh. If the story has anything to teach about sin it must be this. But it is significant that none of the four Hebrew roots which are most characteristically used of the concept of sin are found in this story at all. It seems doubtful that the story was ever intended to teach anything explicitly about sin.

The final mood of the Old Testament with respect to sin is, then, still basically covenantal. Through the covenant God offers his strength and support to his people. His people are "frail children of dust, and feeble as frail" and need the strength and support which only their covenant God can give them. Yet men continually rebel against the covenant demands of God and prefer to put their trust in "man and make flesh their arm" because, in their pride and their insecurity this seems materially more reliable. At the same time, when they would eventually turn to God they find that their frail nature makes it difficult, almost impossible, for them to obey his commands. In both pride and weakness man has turned away from God, either deliberately or unconsciously, has forsaken the covenant, and has lost the power and strength which God would give to him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albright, W. F. From the Stone Age to Christianity, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940.

Alt, A. Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts, Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1934.

Baab, O. J. The Theology of the Old Testament, New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949.

Badè, W. F. The Old Testament in the Light of Today, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915.

Barton, G. A. Archaeology and the Bible, 7th ed. rev.; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937.

_____. "A Liturgy for the Celebration of the Spring Festival at Jerusalem in the Age of Abraham and Melchizedek," Journal of Biblical Literature, LIII (April, 1934), 61-78.

Bennett, W. H. Exodus, Century Bible; Edinburgh: T. C. and E. C. Jack, n.d.

Bewer, J. The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, New York: Columbia University Press, 1926.

Bowman, R. A. "Yahweh the Speaker," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, III (January, 1944), 1-8.

Breasted, J. H. The Dawn of Conscience, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933.

_____. A History of Egypt, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

Brown, F., Driver, S. R., and Briggs, C. A. A Hebrew and English Lexicon, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906.

Budde, K. The Religion of Israel to the Exile, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899.

Burrows, M. An Outline of Biblical Theology, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946.

Calkins, R. The Modern Message of the Minor Prophets, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947.

Candlish, J. S. The Biblical Doctrine of Sin, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893.

Cheyne, T. K. The Book of Hosea, Cambridge Bible; Cambridge: University Press, 1905.

Cheyne, T. K. and Black, J. S. (eds.); Encyclopaedia Biblica. 4 vols. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1899. Articles, "Right, Righteousness" and "Sacrifice."

Cripps, R. C. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929.

Davidson, A. B. The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Cambridge Bible; Cambridge: University Press, 1906.

_____. The Theology of the Old Testament, (ed. from author's MSS by S.D.F. Salmond), New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

Driver, S. R. The Book of Genesis, 7th ed. rev.; Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen and Co., 1909.

_____. The Books of Joel and Amos, Cambridge Bible; Cambridge: University Press, 1907.

_____. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy, ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.

_____. Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, Rev.; New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910.

Dussaud, R. Les Origines Cananeenes du Sacrifice Israelite, Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1921.

Edghill, E. A. The Book of Amos, 2nd ed.; Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen and Co., 1926.

Eichrodt, W. Das Menschenverständnis des alten Testaments, Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1947.

_____. "The Right Interpretation of the Old Testament," Theology Today, trans. D. H. Gard; (April, 1950), pp. 15-25.

_____. Theologie des alten Testaments, 3 vols., Zweite Auflage; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1939.

Elliott-Binns, L. E. The Book of Numbers, Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen and Co., 1927.

_____. The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen and Co., 1919.

Frankfort, H. Ancient Egyptian Religion, New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.

Frankfort, H. et al. The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.

Frazer, J. G. The Golden Bough, One Vol. Ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927.

Furlani, G. "The Basic Aspect of Hittite Religion," Harvard Theological Review, XXXI (1938), 251-262.

Ginsberg, H. L. "Ugaritic Studies and the Bible," Biblical Archaeologist, VIII (1945), 41-58.

Gordis, R. "The Significance of the Paradise Myth," American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, LII (1936), 86-94.

_____. "Some Effects of Primitive Thought on Language," American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, LV (1938), 270-284.

Graham, W. C. "The Religion of the Hebrews," Journal of Religion, XI (1931), 242-259.

Gray, G. B. Sacrifice in the Old Testament, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.

Harper, W. R. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Amos and Hosea, ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905.

Hastings, J. A Dictionary of the Bible, 5 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899. Articles, "Righteousness in O.T." and "Sin".

Hempel, J. Das Ethos des alten Testaments, BZAW; Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1938.

_____. "Sünde und Offenbarung nach alt- und neutestamentlicher Anschauung," Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie, (1933), pp. 165-193.

The Holy Scriptures according to the Masorotic Text, (ed.) Max L. Margolis; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917.

Horne, C. F. (ed.) Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East, Vols. I & II, New York: Parke, Austin and Lipscomb, 1917.

Jastrow, M. Jr. The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria, 2nd ed.; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1915.

_____. Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914.

The Jewish Encyclopaedia, 12 vols., New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1925.

Kirkpatrick, A. F. The Book of the Psalms, Cambridge Bible; Cambridge: University Press, 1906.

Kittel, R. Biblia Hebraica, 2nd ed. Lipsiae: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908.

Knudsen, A. C. The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament, New York: Abingdon Press, 1918.

Kohler, L. Theologie des alten Testaments, Tubingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr, 1910.

Krueling, E. G. "The Real Religion of Ancient Israel," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLVII (1928), 133-159.

Leslie, E. A. Old Testament Religion, New York: Abingdon Press, 1936.

Levy, R. Deutero-Isaiah, London: Oxford University Press, 1925.

Lofthouse, W. F. Ezekiel, Century Bible; Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1907.

_____. "Hen and Hesed in the Old Testament," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 1933, pp. 29-35.

Mandelkern, S. Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae, Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae, Lipsiae: Veit et Comp., 1896.

Marti, K. The Religion of the Old Testament: Its Place among the Religions of the Nearer East, trans. G. A. Eichemann; London: Williams and Norgate, 1907.

McCown, C. C. The Genesis of the Social Gospel, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929.

McNeile, A. H. The Book of Exodus, Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen and Co., 1908.

Meek, T. J. Hebrew Origins, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936.

_____. "Some Religious Origins of the Hebrews," American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, XXXVII (1921), 101-137.

Montgomery, J. A. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927.

Moore, G. F. Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927.

Nelson, H. H. "The Egyptian Temple, with Particular Reference to the Theban Temples of the Empire Period," Biblical Archaeologist, VII (1944), 44-55.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.

Obermann, J. "An Antiphonal Psalm from Ras Shamra," Journal of Biblical Literature, LV (March, 1936), 21-44.

Oesterley, W.O.E. Sacrifices in Ancient Israel, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937.

Oesterley, W.O.E. and Robinson, T. H. Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development, 2nd ed. rev., London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1937.

_____. Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament, London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1934.

Pace, Edward. Ideas of God in Israel, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1924.

Paterson, J. The Praises of Israel, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.

Pattazoni, R. "The Confession of Sins and the Classics," Harvard Theological Review, XXX (1937), 1-14.

Peake, A. S. A Commentary on the Bible, London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1924.

_____. Job, Century Bible; Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1904.

_____. The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament, London: Robert Cully, 1904.

Pedersen, J. Israel: Its Life and Culture, 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1926-1940.

Pfeiffer, R. H. "Images of Yahweh," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLV (1926), 211-222.

_____. Introduction to the Old Testament, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941.

Phythian-Adams, W. J. The Call of Israel, London: Oxford University Press, 1934.

Piper, O. A. "The Biblical Understanding of Man," Theology Today, I (1944), 188-203.

Ramsay, P. Basic Christian Ethics, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.

Richardson, Alan. (ed.), A Theological Word Book of the Bible, London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1950.

Ringgren, H. Word and Wisdom, Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Boktryckerie, 1947.

Robinson, H. W. The Christian Doctrine of Man, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911.

_____. "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXVI, 49ff.

_____. Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946.

_____. The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Rogers, R. W. Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament, New York: Eaton and Mains, 1912.

Rowley, H. H. The Biblical Doctrine of Election, London: Lutterworth Press, 1950.

Schaub, E. L. "The Consciousness of Sin," Harvard Theological Review, V (1921), 121-138.

Schmidt, N. The Messages of the Poets, Messages of the Bible; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911.

Schultz, H. Old Testament Theology, trans. J. A. Paterson; 2 vols. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895.

Scott, R.B.Y. The Relevance of the Prophets, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944.

Sellin, O. E. Theologie des alten Testaments, Zweite Auflage; Leipzig: Quelle and Meyer, 1933.

Skinner, J. I & II Kings, Century Bible; Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.

_____. Isaiah I-XXXIX, Cambridge Bible; Cambridge: University Press, 1909.

Smith, G. A. The Book of the Twelve Prophets, 2 vols. 10th ed. Expositor's Bible; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907.

Smith, J.M.P. "The Chosen People," American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, XLV (1929), 75-85.

_____. The Moral Life of the Hebrews, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923.

Smith, W. R. Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, 3rd ed. with intro. and notes by S. A. Cook; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927.

Snaith, N. The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, London: Epworth Press, 1944.

Staples, W. E. "Some Aspects of Sin in the Old Testament," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, VI (1947), 65-79.

Tennant, R. F. The Concept of Sin, Cambridge: University Press, 1912.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 10 vols. New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia Inc., 1939.

Kade, G. A. The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen and Co., 1911.

Williams, N. P. The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin, London: Longman, Green and Co., 1927.

Wolfe, R. E. "The Terminology of Biblical Theology," Journal of Bible and Religion, XV (1947), 143-7.

Wright, G. E. The Challenge of Israel's Faith, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944.

_____. "How Did Early Israel Differ from Her Neighbors?" Biblical Archaeologist, VI (1943), 1-31.

_____. "The Terminology of Old Testament Religion," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, I (1942).

Young, R. Analytical Concordance to the Bible, 20th ed. rev. by W. H. Stevenson; New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, n.d.

DATE DUE

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

GTU Library
3 2400 00289 4214

Fawcett, S. V.
The O.T. concept of sin ... DX85 F283

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall.